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## **Heroes of early Israel, by Irving F. Woo**



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G R E A T   L E A D E R S   S E R I E S

EDITED BY E. HERSEY SNEATH, PH.D., LL.D.

YALE UNIVERSITY

THE HEROES  
OF EARLY ISRAEL



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TORONTO

# THE HEROES OF EARLY ISRAEL

BY

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New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

The "Great Leaders Series" aims to meet the needs of moral and religious secondary education. Adolescence is pre-eminently the period of Idealism. The naïve obedience to authority characteristic of childhood is to a large extent supplanted at this time by self-initiative; — by self-determination in accordance with ideals adopted or framed by the individual himself. Furthermore, the ideals of this period are concrete rather than abstract. They are embodied in individual lives, and, generally, in lives of action. Hence biographies of great leaders appeal strongly to the adolescent. They furnish examples and stimulus for conduct along the higher lines. The "Great Leaders Series" will include a large number of volumes devoted to the study of some of the greatest moral and spiritual leaders of the race. Although designed primarily for use in the class-room, they will serve admirably the purposes of a general course of reading in biography for youth.

E. HERSEY SNEATH.



## PREFACE

This book is written primarily for use in schools, but the writer hopes that it may be found of interest outside the class-room. The early biblical narratives took their form as stories told in ancient Israel. To attempt to retell them for the people of to-day is only a return to their original use.

In trying to interpret these tales the writer has kept in mind three principles: I. The old tales ought to be made as vivid as possible. Too often the archaic biblical English, dignified though it be, serves as a screen to obscure the reality of the story, especially to young people. When the tale has been made real to the reader then he should be sent to the Bible to read the story there. It would be a rash writer who would set his version in place of the splendid simplicity of the English Bible. In this book every statement in dialogue or narration is intended to reproduce the Hebrew text or its implications. II. The geography of Palestine and Egypt and the facts of history amid which the stories move ought to be made very clear. More than most great stories of the world, the tales of ancient Israel rest for their vividness upon their environment of land and people. III. It is necessary to recognize that two or more versions of some of the stories are interwoven in the biblical narratives. To ignore this

## PREFACE

is often to involve the tale in hopeless confusion, sometimes in contradiction. This is the problem of sources, about which something is said in Chapter II. Teachers should know more about it than is contained in those brief statements. Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias discuss it in articles on the Pentateuch, Joshua and Judges. The present writer has tried to put it briefly in a book for college students, "The Bible as Literature," New York, 1914. All readers of these stories should recognize that they were told differently at various times and in various parts of the country and that their present form is often combined from two or more of these versions. The recognition of popular story telling in the early biblical books will forestall the greater part of the difficulties about the Bible which young people are almost certain to meet.

The passages at the end of the chapters are those upon which the chapters are based. If possible, readings in them should be assigned as a part of the lesson, with such topics, suggestions and questions as may best fit the need of the class. To gain the power of intelligent reading of the English Bible should be one of the objects of the course.

I wish to acknowledge obligations to Professor E. Hershey Sneath, the editor of this series, and to Professors H. T. Fowler and G. A. Dahl for suggestions of general plan, to Miss Eva M. Porter, of the Capen School, to Mr. John Dallas, of the Taft School, and to Mr. T. R. Hyde, of the Hill School, for helpful criticism of the book from the teacher's point of view, to the Forbes Library and to Miss

## PREFACE

Clara Bodman of Northampton, Mass., for the use  
of illustrations, and to my daughters for assistance  
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reading.

I. F. W.

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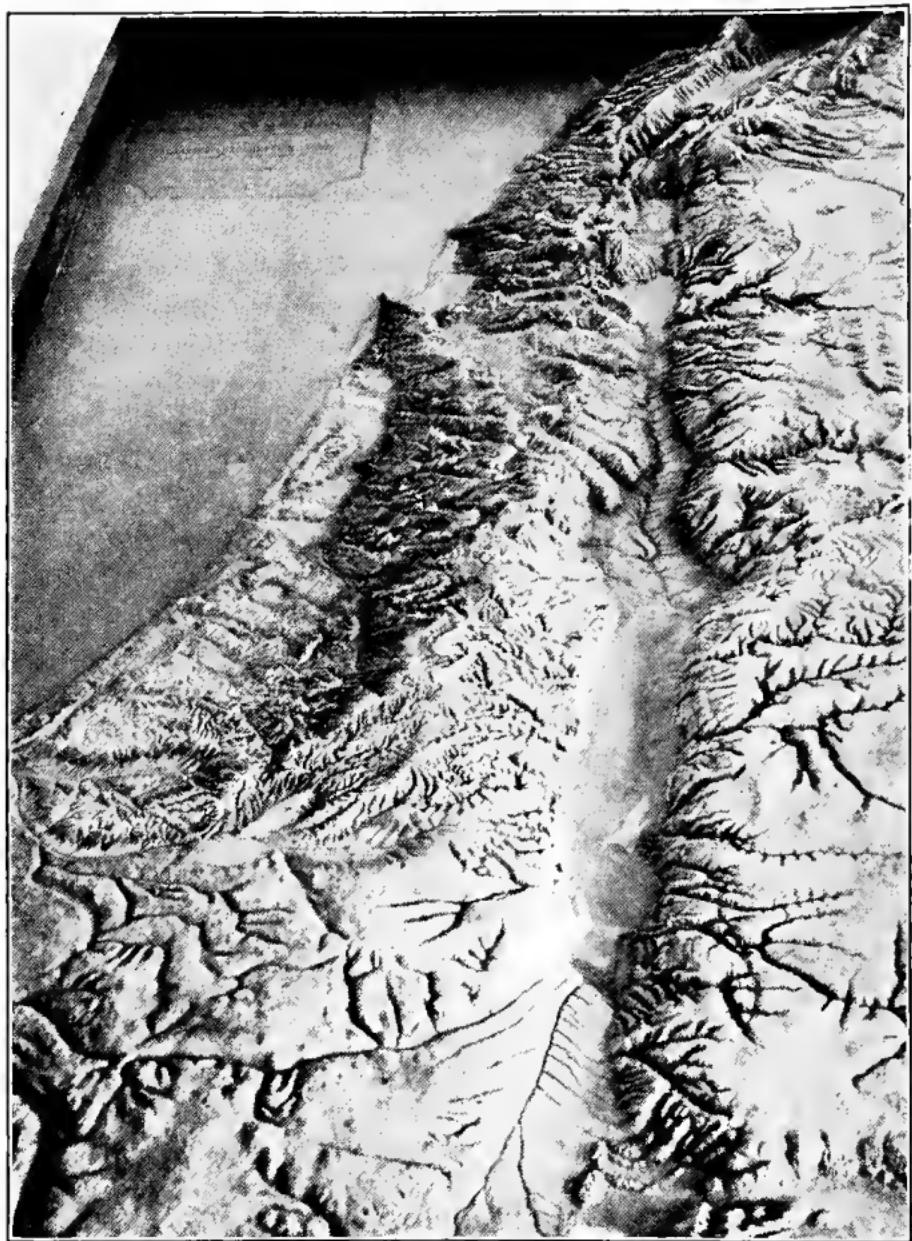
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In the lower part of the map the wide plains broken by valleys are the northern part of the Wilderness where the Hebrews lived after the exodus. Beersheba and Hebron lie where the sharp ridges begin to appear, in the middle of the map. The wide plain at the west is Philistia. East of it lie the hills of Judea; east of these, the deep valley of the Dead Sea; east of that, the hills of Moab. Jerusalem lies on the top of the Judean hills west of the head of the Dead Sea. Jericho was in the Jordan Valley north of the Dead Sea. The long, narrow valley farther north, coming down to the Jordan from the east, is the Jabbok, and the country through which it flows is Gilead. West of the Jordan at this point are the hills of Ephraim, where Joshua lived. The high point projecting into the Mediterranean is Mount Carmel. East of Carmel is the Plain of Esdraelon, the scene of Gideon's conquest. Northeast, near the head of the Jordan, is the Lake of Gennesaret, or Sea of Galilee; farther north, the small Lake Huleh. North of that lay Dan, on the slope of the highest peak in Palestine, Mt. Hermon. The mountain ranges in the extreme north are Lebanon, the western, and Anti-Lebanon, the eastern. Damascus lies in the northeast corner of the map.







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A Relief Map of Palestine Showing the Mediterranean to the Left, the Hills and Valleys of Palestine in the centre and the Deep Jordan Valley and Dead Sea on the Right.

# THE HEROES OF EARLY ISRAEL

## CHAPTER I

### THE LAND OF THE HEBREWS

The land of the Hebrews has two names, Palestine and Canaan. Palestine was the Greek name. It originally meant Philistia, the plains on the southern coast, then later it came to be used for the whole land. Canaan is the usual name in the Old Testament. It also meant at first only the low country along the coast but was extended very early to mean all the land. The names usually mean the country between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, but sometimes they include the land east of the Jordan which was also part of the home of the Hebrews.

Palestine is a very small country. In round numbers, Palestine can be said to be 150 miles long. Compare some distances in western countries; the railroad distance from New York to Albany is 143 miles; Philadelphia to Washington, 135 miles; Montreal to Quebec, 173 miles; Boston to Pittsfield, 151 miles; St. Paul to Duluth, 156 miles; it is about half the distance from Chicago to Cincinnati or from end to end of Scotland. The breadth at Beersheba is about 90 miles; not quite as far as from Albany

to Utica, from New York to Philadelphia, or from Cleveland to Erie. At Jerusalem it is 55 miles wide; about the distance from Boston to Portsmouth, from New York to Bridgeport, or from Cincinnati to Dayton. It narrows gradually, till in the extreme north it is only 25 miles wide. These measurements are from the Mediterranean to the Jordan Valley. The whole width of the country inhabited by the Hebrews would add twenty or thirty miles on the other side of the Jordan. The area of the country is about 6000 square miles. That is smaller than Wales, or about half the size of Holland; one-fourth smaller than Massachusetts, or one-third smaller than Vermont. Palestine could be put into the state of New York nearly eight times; into Illinois over nine times; into California thirty-six times, and into Texas nearly forty-four times.

It is a land of mountains. From all parts of the land, except the seacoast of the extreme south, the Hebrew could say literally, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills." Where the mountains are not too steep, limestone makes long slopes and rounded outlines; but since it is usually soft and easily cut by water, the steep descents are often carved into deep ravines, high precipices and strange and fantastic rock forms. In general, the scenery is less rugged and the rocks less jagged than in a granite region.

The Palestine hills are now bare. The rains of long years have often washed off the earth and great patches of yellow limestone rock are everywhere visible. On the central ridge the fields are often narrow terraces, built up with stone to hold a

little soil on which to grow a few vines or a half bushel of wheat. In the spring the wild flowers do their best to spot the stony hillsides with color, but later in the summer the country looks parched and gray. In the times of the early Hebrews there were forests on some of the hills of central Palestine, but even then most of the country west of the Jordan was pasture land which dried up in the heat of summer and made the springs in the valleys the most precious possessions of the people.

If you should ride east from Jaffa on the seacoast up to Jerusalem and down to Jericho in the Jordan Valley, you would cross the four great divisions of the country.

(1) The coast plain, level and sandy, gradually rising as one goes nearer the hills. The part near the hills is especially rich and fertile, and in the early summer is covered with fields of waving grain. In the south it is 16 miles wide and gradually narrows till, half way up the coast, it is only a few rods wide about the foot of a projecting spur, Mount Carmel. Then it widens again and is again narrowed by the hills of Galilee. On the southern plain and the lower hills behind it the Philistines lived. It is often called in the Bible Philistia. This plain has the same relation to the sea and the hills as the coast plain along the Atlantic from New Jersey south.

(2) The hill country. This divides in the south of Palestine into two parts: (a) the foothills, long, rounded ridges, here broken by valleys through which the streams find outlet. This was a rich farming

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land, full of towns and villages. Toward the north this section becomes narrower. It corresponds to the Piedmont region of foothills along the Appalachian range, west of the Atlantic coast plain.

(b) The central ridge, a plateau cut into valleys by the action of the winter streams. It is the southern extension of the Lebanon Mountains. This is the roof of the land. From every height one looks down deep valleys to the east or the west, and beyond the Jordan can be seen the mountains of Gilead or, farther south over the Dead Sea, the high sharp edge of the plain of Moab. The range is about as high as the Berkshire Hills, the Catskills, or the Alleghenies in Pennsylvania. Jerusalem, which fairly represents the average height in that region, is 2500 feet above sea level. North and south of Jerusalem summits rise to over 3000 feet. Near Hebron, 20 miles south, is a height of 3500 feet, beyond which the mountains gradually sink into a half desert plain. To the north this mountain land stretches through Palestine, with one break at the Plain of Esdraelon. On this central range were the most important towns; Nazareth, Shechem, Samaria, Bethel, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron. On this ridge lived most of the heroes of Hebrew story — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joshua, Gideon, David and all the kings, Isaiah and most of the prophets.

(3) The Jordan Valley. The eastern side of the central ridge drops off in deep, precipitous valleys to the bottom of a great gorge, the deepest valley on earth. It was made by what geologists call a fault. On each side the rock was pushed up,

leaving this huge valley between like a great ditch, reaching from the eastern arm of the Red Sea, between the Lebanon and the anti-Lebanon, into northern Syria, a distance of 350 miles. It is 1300 feet below sea level at the shore of the Dead Sea, while under the northern end of that sea is a great cuplike depression, 1300 feet deeper still, or 2600 feet below sea level; about as much below as Jerusalem is above sea level. Once this valley contained a lake 200 miles long, reaching from the Sea of Galilee to fifty miles south of the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea are the remnants of that old lake.

The river Jordan rises on the mountains in the north and comes tumbling down into a marshy valley, then it flows through a little lake four miles long called in the Old Testament The Waters of Merom, now Lake Huleh. Here it is already only seven feet above sea level. After two miles of placid course it goes roaring and foaming over the rocks of a narrow ravine for nine miles to the Sea of Galilee, or Lake of Gennesaret. This lake is 680 feet below sea level, twelve and a half miles long and eight miles wide, and the hills come close to it all about except at the northern end.

Then comes the great gorge of the Jordan Valley. It is 65 miles from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, eight miles less than the distance from New York to Poughkeepsie, but the river winds about so much that its actual course is nearly 200 miles, almost as far as from New York to Lake George. Most of the way it runs very rapidly and becomes muddy

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with sediment before it reaches the Dead Sea. The valley varies in width from four miles just below the Sea of Galilee to fourteen miles, above the Dead Sea. The Jordan floods its banks in the spring and the flooded land is covered with a jungle of trees and bushes, so that from the heights above the course of the river is a ribbon of green.

The Dead Sea is forty-seven miles long and ten wide. On the east a gigantic wall of rock rises, broken by a few deep and narrow valleys. On the west the hills are more broken, but quite as barren. In this parched wilderness the water of the lake lies sparkling in the sun, as limpid and beautiful as any lake in the world. But so heavy is it with salts that no fish can live in it and a swimmer can sit in the water as in a chair. It has no outlet. In this narrow, hot valley all the water which enters evaporates, leaving the salts brought from the hills to make the water continually more dense.

Below the Dead Sea the valley rises very gradually, making a stretch of barren, heated desert, called the Arabah, between the southern part of Palestine and the highland to the East.

(4) East of the Jordan Valley lies another ridge of high land. The northern part was called Bashan, the middle, Gilead, and the southern, Moab. At the extreme northern end is Mt. Hermon, 9200 feet high, its top covered with snow except for a few weeks during the summer. It is the great mountain of Palestine, looming so far above the others that it can be seen from the heights even as far south as the

hills above Jericho. Bashan and Moab are largely plains, lying about as high as the hills on the west of the Jordan, but Gilead, between the two, is a land of hills and valleys, of running brooks and wooded hillsides.

Palestine lies between  $33\frac{1}{2}$  and 31 degrees north. On the Atlantic coast this is from Charleston, South Carolina, to a little north of Florida. The great variations of elevation in Palestine give it a very unusual variety of climate. At Joppa, on the coast, oranges grow luxuriantly. At Jerusalem snow frequently falls in the winter, while the deep Jordan valley is as hot as almost any part of the tropics. This variation of climate makes possible a great variety of vegetation. On the hills of Gilead are firs and oaks and in the Jordan Valley are date palms. The fruits of the temperate zone and of the semi-tropics grow almost side by side. The country produces olives, figs, pomegranates, mulberries, apples, dates,—to mention only some of the fruits known to the Hebrews of Bible times.

Palestine lay on the road between the two great nations of the ancient world, Babylon and Egypt. The direct route between them would have lain south of Palestine, but that way was blocked by a wide desert, and the road usually used kept to the north, not far from the coast, then across the plain of Esdraelon, over the Jordan and north by way of Damascus to the Euphrates and then down that river to Babylon. Even on this road there was much desert; Palestine was the largest fertile region along

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the way. It was this fertility which first drew the Hebrews themselves to Palestine. They came as shepherd tribes seeking pasture for their flocks.

Another road came up from the south to Hebron and passed on along the top of the central ridge to Jerusalem, Bethel, Shechem, then through the hills of Galilee and across the Jordan north of the Sea of Galilee to Damascus. Another road from Damascus passed east of Gilead and Moab, to Elath at the head of the eastern arm of the Red Sea. Over these roads traders carried the goods of distant lands, and farmers brought wheat and shepherds wool to the bazaars of the towns. The roads were only tracks over hills and deserts with camping places at the brooks or springs, but the same trails had been followed for generations.

## CHAPTER II

### ABRAHAM THE EMIGRANT

"He went out, not knowing whither he went."

### HOW THE HEBREW STORIES CAME TO US

It was evening on the Judean hills. A group of shepherds had brought their sheep to the fold, eaten their simple supper, and were gathered about the fire to talk for a little while before wrapping their cloaks about them and lying down to sleep. Some of the shepherds were scarcely more than boys, and some were gray-haired men with grizzled beards. The boys gathered about one of the older men. "Tell us a story," they urged. "Tell us of the old days when Abraham lived here at Hebron." Now the old man was a famous story-teller, and nothing loath he told them the tale he had heard from his father when he was a boy, of how Abraham once, long ago, fed his sheep on these very hills and camped under the old tree not far away, and at last was buried in a piece of land he had bought from the owners in the market at the city gate of Hebron. And all the shepherds listened, though some of them had heard the tale many times before, for the old man told it so vividly that they seemed to see the ancient patriarch at the door of his tent, and to hear his voice as he bargained for the land. When he finished the

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shepherd said, "So God was guiding Abraham that he might give us this land of promise."

What this old shepherd did that evening others did before him and after him, generation after generation, repeating the old stories about what had happened at Hebron. At other places in Palestine stories were also told by the old people. The stories were told in the villages when the day's work was over, in the camps of soldiers on the march, by mothers to the little children, by old men famed for their skill in story-telling. At the shrines the priests had old tales about why the spot was sacred. Some of the stories explained the names of places — why one place was called "The Well of the Oath" and another "The House of God" and another "The Cluster." Some explained the customs of the people, as why they never ate a certain part of the thigh in meat. But mostly they were tales about the ancient heroes of the nation, and the days when the Hebrew ancestors first came to Palestine, or when they went to Egypt, or how they were led back to Palestine in wonderful ways by their God. Of course the same story was told a little differently in different places, and each locality had its favorite group of local stories, but they all gathered about certain great characters of the olden time — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua and the warriors called the Judges.

In the early days of the kingdom, in the time of David and Solomon, a group of men known as prophets rose to prominence. They were very earnest about the worship of the national God, Jehovah.

They demanded that the rulers should do justly and that the rich should not oppress the poor. They reminded the people that Jehovah had given them this good land of theirs and that he demanded their worship, and he would surely punish the wicked and reward the good. Now these popular stories of the olden time furnished excellent illustrations of the very things the prophets wished to teach, so in time they too turned story-tellers. They gathered up these old tales and wrote them out, to teach the lessons they were trying to impress on the people.

One collection of stories was made by an unknown prophet of Judah, probably within a century of the time of Solomon. Some of the finest, most vivid narrations of the Bible belong to this collection, which is often called the early Judean prophetic history. Soon after, a prophet of northern Israel gathered the tales which were told in that part of the country. Some of the tales were the same as in the Judean collection, but with more or less difference in the details. This collection is sometimes called the northern prophetic history. Both, being written by prophets, had the same point of view. They showed that sin brings suffering; that God guided the ancestors of Israel until finally he brought them into Palestine; and that Israel ought still to serve and trust the God of their fathers.

In 586 B. C. Israel was conquered by Babylon and the best part of the nation carried away captive to Babylonia. There a great interest in the priesthood developed, and at some time later a priest wrote out the traditions of the origins of worship as they

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had been told among the priests, along with the laws and the traditions about their origin. This is called the priestly history. An older book of laws already existed in Israel, now embodied in the book of Deuteronomy.

Now came the last step in this history. Some one took the old collections of prophetic stories and the newer priestly collection of stories and laws and compiled them into one, bringing in also the older law book called Deuteronomy. Men sometimes make a harmony of the gospels, weaving them together to form a connected life of Christ. This writer did exactly the same thing. He wove together the old collections into a history of early Israel up to the time when they were settled in Palestine, showing how God had guided the origin and growth of the nation. This work comes to us as the first six books of the Old Testament, from Genesis to Joshua.

The story of Israel began in a land far off from Palestine. On the wide plains of Mesopotamia between the Tigris and the Euphrates was a town called Haran. It meant, in the language of Babylon, "the Road." Caravan routes centered there, coming up from the land of ancient civilization, Babylonia, and from thence scattering north and east and west. Here the Hebrew story placed the home of the first Hebrew emigrants. Indeed, the late priestly form of the story carries the home of the first Hebrews still farther back, to a Babylonian city, Ur, five hundred and sixty miles down the Euphrates. Ur was a famous old town, one of



the great ancient cities of Babylonia. It was a center of civilization and a shrine of the moon-god Sin. This god was also worshiped in Haran, and it has been surmised that Haran was a colony from Ur. It is very probable that the family ultimately came, along with other emigrants, from Babylonia and had settled in Haran with its caravansaries and bazaars.

In this town, then, lived Abraham, the ancestor of the Hebrews, and his brothers, Nahor and Haran. Their father Terah died in Haran; so did the brother Haran, leaving a son, Lot, who came, after the Oriental fashion, under the protection of his uncle Abraham. He was all the more welcome because Abraham and his wife Sarah had no children.

Abraham was the sheik, or head, of a household that made almost a tribe. These shepherds had flocks and herds and their tents were set up, now here and now there, on the plains. To Haran they took the wool of their sheep, and from Haran they brought the cloth for their clothes and the black camel's hair goods for their tents and the clay pots for cooking, and sometimes dates from the palms of Babylon and other luxuries from foreign lands. The land about Haran was fertile and well watered. It was crowded with people and flocks. Perhaps pastureage for the growing flocks of Abraham and his nephew was scarce. They resolved to migrate to new lands. The story as it has come to us in the Book of Genesis was written by men who were interested in showing how God had led the ancestors

of the Hebrew people. They ascribed the migration of Abraham, as they did many other things, to God's direct command. God said to Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee." In these old Hebrew stories we need not stumble over tales of God talking with men. Modern writers mean the same when they say that God sent the Pilgrims across the wintry sea to found New England. God guides men; that is a belief very widespread and expressed in many ways.

The great plains between the Euphrates and Palestine were the home of shepherd tribes. Caravan routes passed over them, and where the routes crossed or where they forded the rivers or where a stream made a specially fertile place, towns had grown up. Even in the north rivers were few, and much of the land furnished only scanty pasture. Farther south the country became desert, and the few tribes fought for the possession of the rare oases. The caravans must make long journeys from one watering place to another over sandy stretches of inhospitable desert. Through this northern land came Abraham and his tribe, but they made no settlement. As he went toward the south the desert gradually closed in from the east. On the west were the high ridges of the Lebanon, well watered but rugged, perhaps already fully occupied with a settled people, in whose narrow valleys there was no room for the great flocks of nomad shepherds. Southwest lay the lower hills and more open valleys

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of Canaan, and here they sought a home for themselves and pasture for their flocks.

Abraham was a great man, who dealt on equal terms with the chiefs of the land. His camp contained shepherds, herdsmen, household servants and slaves. His wife, whose name was Sarah, "The Princess," had her own attendants. His nephew, Lot, with his wife and children and dependents, was also in the camp. Lot was rich in his own right, and his flocks added to those of Abraham formed an embarrassment of riches among the somewhat constricted pasture lands of central Palestine. At last the great camp pitched their tents at a place, Shechem, where a wide upland valley forms the best pass through the central ridge of Palestinian hills south of the Plain of Esdraelon. Springs make the valley fertile, and even thus early a town may have existed at the camping ground on the height of the pass. A rich plain near by awaited the flocks of shepherds. A terebinth tree was later known as a tree of divination, and here, tradition said, Abraham encamped, and built an altar. Under this sacred tree, by the altar, came another message from God; "Unto thy seed will I give this land."

The rich plains below Shechem were not the permanent abode of this emigrant tribe. Such territories are taken early, and later comers must fight if they would gain them; so again the tents were struck and the slow caravans moved south across the plains and up the slopes to the highest point on the limestone ridge which forms the backbone of Palestine. Here, where the bare rocks show among the

scanty herbage, where every height looks down upon lower lands to the east or the west, the homeless emigrants found a temporary resting place near Bethel.

Genesis 11:27-12:9, Abraham's migration to Canaan.

## CHAPTER III

### ABRAHAM IN PALESTINE I

#### THE JOURNEYS OF THE SHEPHERD CHIEF

Those who told the story of Abraham did not aim to write a biography. They told a series of stories about this ancient hero, some of which were connected with the places in which he is said to have lived, and some of which preserved remembrances of his character. The result of the whole is a series of memoirs rather than a biography. They are intended to make an impression of a great character rather than to give an accurate history of events. The order in which the journeys of Abraham are given is as follows: (1) a journey to Egypt (12:10), (2) a return to Bethel (13:3), (3) a migration to Hebron (13:18), (4) a military excursion to the far north, Hobah, west of Damascus (14:15), (5) a migration from Hebron still farther south, to Beersheba (21:31), (6) back to Hebron, where he purchased a burying place, and where he and his wife Sarah were buried (23:2, 25:8-10). It is interesting that nearly all the stories of Abraham are connected with the extreme south of the land. The great events of Hebrew history took place, for the most part, between Jerusalem and the Galilean hills, but for that region only Bethel and

Shechem are connected with the traditions of Israel's greatest ancient hero.

The writers here introduce a story which brings Abraham once more into contact with the great world of ancient civilization. A famine came, as famines have often done, upon the hills of Palestine. Now it was common knowledge throughout the East that Egypt, watered by the Nile, seldom suffered from famine, and Egyptian records show that she sometimes opened her eastern border lands to refugees from the lands beyond. It was a long, hard journey over half desert land to Egypt. There must have been long discussions about the camp fires before it was finally decided to roll up the black tents and drive the herds down the hillsides to begin the tedious journey to a strange land. Other nomadic tribes must have also moved along the same way, driven by the famine. They were admitted to Egypt and allowed to pasture their cattle till the famine was over.

Here a most unexpected story is told, which could never have been considered in any way creditable to this ancient worthy. Knowing that officials of Egypt were eager to place beautiful women in the harem of the king, Abraham feared for his life. He asked his wife to consent to a lie, and say that she was his sister and not that she was his wife. The ruse succeeded; it came near succeeding too well, but God intervened and Abraham came out of this disreputable episode with more flocks and herds, more silver and gold, than he had before; for the king sent him away with gifts. Lying in the ancient east

was not regarded as a serious fault, but to deny one's wife could never have been looked upon as anything but dastardly. A tradition ascribing such a deed to a national hero seems at first sight very strange. Probably it was told to show that God was so guiding the ancestors of the nation that even their sin and their folly were overruled for the furthering of his plan. It is curious that each of the three collections of stories used by the writers of Genesis has preserved a tale of this sort; two about Abraham (12: 10-20, 20: 1-18) and one about Isaac (26: 6-11). The second story about Abraham and that about Isaac are laid in the south of Palestine and the name of the same king, Abimelech, appears in both. It is natural to suppose that these are three varying forms of one original story.

Abraham's tribe included the family of Lot, Abraham's nephew, who also had wife and children, flocks and herds, servants and retainers. As their flocks grew it is not surprising that strife arose between the herdsmen of Abraham and of Lot. The crest of the rocky ridge at Bethel is not wide and there were other tribes about with flocks of their own to pasture on the hillsides. At last the two relatives, who had traveled and camped together for years, agreed to separate. Abraham, the sheik of the tribe, might have dictated to the younger, Lot. Instead, he gives a free choice. "If thou wilt take the left, I will go to the right: if thou wilt take the right, I will go to the left." Lot lifted up his eyes and looked; and they rested upon the one spot of

rich fertility which can be seen from near Bethel, the valley of the lower Jordan. It seemed like a very garden of God, and Lot chose that.

So he went down the steep valleys into the Jordan plains and Abraham still pastured his flocks on the stony hilltops. Before long, however, Abraham also left and migrated thirty miles farther south, to the broader fields near Hebron. Here later tradition connected his camp with an aged sacred tree, as at Shechem, and with an altar for worship, as at Bethel.

But Abraham did not forget his nephew who had chosen life in the Jordan plain. Kings from Elam and Shinar, the country of the Babylonian empire, made an invasion of the west. They conquered the tribes on the pastoral plateaus to the east of the Jordan Valley, raided far to the south, to El-Paran, the later Elath, at the head of the Red Sea, then came north and attacked the cities of the Jordan plain. In a whirlwind raid, such as the East has always been subject to, they captured and looted the towns, gathered the population as slaves and swept on to the north with their booty. Among the captives were Lot and his family. The easier choice had brought disaster. Then Abraham became, for once in the story, a warrior. He gathered what force he could and started to rescue his nephew. He caught up with the invading army at Dan, in the extreme north of the later possessions of Israel, and chased them far out over the northern plains. Then the captives and their rescuers came back.

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But the disasters of Lot's choice of the easy life were not yet over. One day, as Abraham sat at his tent door in the heat of the day, he looked up and saw three men approaching. With the gracious courtesy of Arabian hospitality he ran to greet them and begged them to rest and eat a morsel of bread. Then he hastened his household and spread the best feast a shepherd camp could provide. The old tale has it that the three men were divine messengers, and that one of them was God himself.

The meal was over, and the men took their leave along the road to the Jordan plain. Like the modern Bedouin host, Abraham walked with them a short distance. The whole tale presents Abraham as, from the point of view of Palestinian civilization, a high-minded and courteous gentleman. God himself, it is not irreverent to say, thus judged him. He is represented as saying to himself, "Why should I hide my plans from Abraham? I know that he will rear his family in righteousness, so that they will become a great nation." Then God tells him that the great wickedness of Sodom will bring upon it a merited destruction. The two divine companions go on and Abraham stands still before Jehovah. Then the great heart of the old shepherd chief pleads in pity, not merely for his nephew Lot, but for all the doomed city. "It may be there are still some righteous in the city. Would not God in his mercy save it for fifty righteous?" God said he would. "And for forty-five?" "Yes." "For forty?" "Yes." "For thirty?" "For twenty?" and each time God

consents. "I will speak but once more. If only ten should be found there?" "I will not destroy it for ten's sake."

The two messengers of God went on to the city, but only to find it hopelessly bad. Lot, who now dwelt in the city, was the only one among the churlish inhabitants who opened the door to them. Lot's guests hastened him and his family from the city. "Do not wait," they said. "Hurry to the hills. Do not even stay to look behind." On their heels came the swift storm of destruction, so close that when Lot's wife halted to see what was going on she was overcome. Later generations pointed to a pillar of rock salt, weathered into fantastic form, as Lot's wife.

The next morning Abraham, anxious in his pity for the great population of the plain cities, went to the point where yesterday he had stood with the divine visitor and looked over the fair scene; but to-day the smoke rose from it like the smoke of a furnace. Meantime Lot, who chose the easy life in spite of its known temptations, was a homeless refugee, hiding in a cave in the hills.

It would seem from this story that the Hebrews thought the cities which were destroyed lay beneath the surface of the Dead Sea. In fact, the Dead Sea is but the remnant of a much larger sea. Those who visited its barren shores, tasted its salt and nauseous waters and saw the bitumen along its shore, naturally concluded that this lake, so different from any other body of water they knew, must mark some

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great judgment of God. The story they told about it made a great moral lesson of sin and its punishment.

Genesis 12: 10-20, Abraham in Egypt. Genesis 13: 1-13, Lot's choice. Genesis 14: 1-24, Abraham a warrior. Genesis 18: 1-33, A divine visitor. Genesis 19: 1-28, The outcome of Lot's choice.

## CHAPTER IV

### ABRAHAM IN PALESTINE II

#### How ABRAHAM BECAME "THE FRIEND OF GOD"

"El Khalil," "The Friend," is to this day the Moslem name of Hebron, near which Abraham lived so long. "El Khalil" they also call Abraham, more often than by his name. So James (2:23) says that Abraham was called the friend of God, and a Hebrew prophet (Is. 41:8) makes God speak to "Israel my servant — the seed of Abraham my friend."

All through the stories of Abraham run a series of accounts of covenants which God made with him as with a friend. Before he started on his long journey from Haran God promised to make of him a great nation. At Shechem Jehovah said to him, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." After he and Lot had separated Jehovah said, "Look north, south, east and west. All the land that you see, to your seed will I give it." Still later, near Hebron, God made a definite covenant with Abraham. "I am childless," said Abraham. "You shall not be childless," said God. "Count the stars of the heavens, if you can. So countless shall be your descendants." The story says that Abraham believed God, but still he asks, "How may I know?" He prepared a sac-

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rifice for Jehovah; beasts and birds were divided and set in two portions over against each other, and he kept watch by them till darkness came down. Then he fell asleep watching the sacrifice and in his sleep there was a sense of awe, a terror of great darkness, and out of it God spoke, and once again promised this land to his descendants.

Still another covenant with God is narrated, where again Abraham was promised a multitude of descendants and this land as their home (17: 1-21). Two things are connected with this tale; (1) a change of name. In Genesis, up to this point, the hero's name was Abram and his wife's Sarai. Now they are changed to Abraham ("Father of a Multitude," the writer takes it to mean) and Sarah (Princess). (2) The account of the origin of circumcision; a ceremony which, like baptism in the Christian Church, was regarded by the Hebrews as a consecration of the people to God. But it was more than that. This old tale made the ceremony a pledge that this land of Palestine should be theirs if they were faithful to God.

Abraham was growing old and he had no children, yet he believed that God had promised the land to his descendants. At last two sons were born to him. One was the son of an inferior wife, the other, of Sarah, and was named Isaac (laughter). A natural jealousy had sprung up in the household and the slave-wife, Hagar, was sent away with her son, Ishmael. They took refuge in the deserts to the south where the boy grew up and became a hunter. This story served to express the sense of relation-

ship which Israel felt with the tribes dwelling to the south, in the deserts of North Arabia. Doubtless the tale which made their ancestress a cast-off slave of Abraham's household did not take its form among the Arabians. Later, however, the Moslem Arabians made much of the relationship, extended the descendants of Ishmael to include all Arabia, and prided themselves on being the children of Abraham.

Meantime Abraham had moved once more from Hebron, going farther to the southeast and camping at Beersheba. To the south rose chalky downs through which the scant rains drained rapidly. In the spring the country was green with grass and rich with flowers but later it was a waterless, barren desert. He had reached the end of the land of Palestine. But his new home was not a wilderness. The chief of another shepherd tribe, Abimelech, was his neighbor, and their herdsmen quarreled over the use of the wells for watering their cattle. The chiefs settled the quarrel in a friendly alliance, such as the desert tribes still make with each other. Abraham planted a tree and dug a well and set aside a special flock of seven sheep to begin a herd in memory of the alliance. That, tradition said, was the origin of the name of the place — Beersheba, the well of the oath,— and of the ancient sacred tree which stood there. The place was always one of the national shrines of Israel.

Through these peaceful years the boy Isaac was growing more precious to his father. Abraham believed that God had promised the perpetuation of the tribal blood and power through this son. Then,

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as the story says, God tested Abraham. He told him to sacrifice Isaac. Human sacrifice was a common thing in the very ancient world. It was a part of the Hebrew heritage from their Semitic ancestors. In the ruins of Gezer, in Palestine, explorers have found that the foundations of some of the houses in the time before the Hebrews were laid over the bones of slaughtered children. In early Israel itself there was at least one case of human sacrifice, Jephthah's daughter.

This custom, repulsive as it is to the civilized world, was a natural issue of sincere religion in primitive times. God ought to have a gift worthy of him. The greater a god is conceived to be, the more valuable should be the gifts presented to him. The most valued possession of the ancient family was children. When children were thought of, not as individuals with the right to life, but as the possessions of their parents, it is inevitable that a vigorous religion should often think of God as demanding the sacrifice of a child. If the first born of the lambs was to be given to God, why not the first born child? Could a man refuse this sacrifice simply because it was more precious and still pretend to care supremely for his God?

The prophets of Jehovah in Israel, who were geniuses in their clear insight of what was right and wrong, vigorously protested against the barbarism of human sacrifice. One of the means they took was to retell this old story about Abraham. It seemed to him that God demanded of him the supreme sacrifice. Who was he that he should refuse? Early

in the morning he arose, cut wood for a sacrifice, took two young men and his son Isaac and set off for the Mount of the Revelation of God (Moriah). Nothing in the story locates this mountain. A late tradition arose that it was the hill in Jerusalem upon which the temple was afterwards built by Solomon; but on or close to this site the town of Jerusalem seems to have already stood. On the third day they came within sight of the hilltop Abraham sought. He left the servants with his ass and said, "My son and I will go yonder and worship." Isaac carried the wood and Abraham the fire and the sacrificial knife. Isaac asked, "Father, where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" and Abraham answered, "God will provide the lamb, my son"; and they went on together. So they toiled up toward the hilltop; and what thoughts were in the mind of the agonized father we can imagine better than describe.

The test was carried to the end. Abraham built the altar, laid the wood in order, bound his son and laid him upon the wood and lifted his knife to strike, when, the story says, God stayed his hand, and a ram, caught in the thicket, furnished a substitute for the boy.

The tale was intended to fix in Hebrew thought the idea that God did not demand human sacrifice. So in Hebrew law the firstborn of the flocks were to be sacrificed, but the firstborn child was to be redeemed by the payment of money or by some offering.

Later, Abraham moved his camp back to Hebron. Here Sarah died. Now, for the first time in all his



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## CHAPTER V

### ISAAC THE UNAMBITIOUS

#### TRADITIONS OF A NEGATIVE CHARACTER

Isaac is a character who moves so passively through Hebrew story that almost no traditions are preserved about him alone. He plays a secondary part in the tales of his noble father or of his clever sons. The lone son of his parent's old age, the petted heir of the shepherd camp, he was perhaps so sheltered and guarded that the real strength of his character had no opportunity to develop. That Isaac could meet a terrible test without flinching was shown when his father laid him on the altar to face death.

Isaac was not a pathbreaker. His boyhood had been spent upon the broad hillsides and wide downs about Hebron, Beersheba, and Gerar. In his manhood he never left that familiar countryside. It was easier to pasture the herds his father had left him on these open spaces than to seek new ranges. Why, indeed, should he move on? To the south the vegetation thinned out rapidly into a gravelly desert. To the north the more fertile slopes were already occupied, so that his father, hardy pioneer as he was, had retreated from the land. The stories mention the Philistines, stronger tribes with better

weapons and a higher culture, as already upon the only attractive land near by, the coast plains of the Mediterranean to the northwest. To the east lay the bare desert of the Dead Sea region, and the high plateaus of pasture land beyond were held by tribes who would not welcome strangers. By far the easiest course was to stay where he was. He even entered upon agriculture, an occupation which the true Bedouin shepherd of Arabia despises, because it attaches a man to a single spot. Nevertheless the new occupation prospered. The wandering shepherd tribe was becoming a rich farming community. They had reached the stage, still held by some of the tribes in that same region, of semi-nomads. That is, their wanderings were limited to well established ranges and they cultivated more or less land in connection with their shepherding of flocks. Yet they did not become wholly settled. The accounts locate the camp sometimes at Hebron, sometimes at Beersheba, sometimes at Gerar; but Hebron and Gerar are not more than twenty-five miles from Beersheba.

The longest account of a single episode in the history of the ancient heroes of Israel is the story of the marriage of Isaac. When Abraham was very old he called his oldest and most faithful servant, who had charge of all his household, Eliezer. He said, "Swear to me that you will not take a wife for Isaac from among the tribes about us. Go back to my native country and my kindred and bring him a wife from there." But the cautious old servant said, "Suppose no woman will come so far

away from her home. Shall Isaac go back there?" "No," said the father. "God brought me from my old home here. He will find a wife for my son. But in any case, Isaac is to stay here, in the land God has promised my descendants." The aged chief was shrewd enough to know that the older and richer land from which he came might bring too strong temptations for the boy reared in shepherd tents on the edge of the desert.

Then the servant took ten camels and all sorts of precious gifts and started on the long journey. One afternoon he came, in the land between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, to the city where Nahor, the brother of Abraham, had lived. It was almost time for the women of the city to come out at sunset to get the night's supply of water, and he made his camels kneel down by the well. Then he prayed to his master's God to give him a sign by which he might pick the chosen maiden; and since the old servant was as shrewd as his master, he set a sign that would indicate a generous and active character. He would ask a drink of some maiden and if she not only gave him a drink but went beyond the needs of courtesy and offered to draw water for his camels also, might God grant that she should be the one for Isaac's wife. Certainly such a maiden would be neither churlish nor lazy.

At that very moment a maiden, very beautiful, came from the city with her water jar on her shoulder. She filled the jar at the well and started back. Then the old servant applied his test. He

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ran to her and said, "Let me have a little drink." It was a request a dusty traveler might make of any woman at the well. "Drink, master," she said, and took the jar from her shoulder for him. Then when he had drunk she went beyond the needs of courtesy, just as the old servant had set for his test, and said, "I will draw water for your camels too." She emptied the water in the trough and ran for more, till all the thirsty camels were satisfied; and Eliezer, well pleased, watched her intently. Then he took out a gold ring and two gold bracelets, and said, "Whose daughter are you? Is there room in your father's house for us to-night?" She said, "My father is Bethuel and my grandfather, Nahor. We have room and food for you." And the old servant said, "Now God be thanked, who has sent me to Abraham's own family."

The girl took the jewels and ran home and told how the man who gave them was waiting for word about the lodging. Then her brother ran out and said, "Come in;" so they went in, and the household made busy preparing for the unexpected guests. Who these were they had not stopped to inquire, but the rich gifts showed them to be persons of note. Soon food was ready for the men, but Eliezer refused to eat before he had told his story of the wealth and prosperity of Abraham, the purpose of his present journey, the test he had applied to Rebekah, and his hope that God had guided him to the right wife for his master's son. When they heard of the test and its outcome they said, "We have nothing to say; God has already decided." The

servant brought out jewels of silver and gold and rich garments and precious gifts for the bride and her family, and then they feasted and slept. The next morning the servant proposed to hasten back but her father and brothers said, "Not yet. Let us keep the maiden at least a few days." But the servant was urgent, Rebekah was willing to go, and they hastened off. The family sang a song of blessing as she mounted the camels and rode away:

"By thousands of thousands may your seed be told,  
And the gates of their foes may they always hold."

Some days later Isaac was wandering quietly in the fields at sunset when he saw camels approaching. From one of them a woman alighted and, after a few words with the caravan leader, veiled herself and came toward him. She was his wife from the old country, and he installed her in the tent where his mother had lived and loved her and trusted her.

Rebekah was a fitting wife for Isaac. He was quiet, retiring, unassuming. She was active, vigorous, decisive, full of spirit and fire. She may have been a hard mistress to a lazy servant, but she was a loyal wife to her husband and a good manager of the tangled affairs of the tribal encampment, and she won the affection and trust of her husband.

There were many points of interest for the Hebrews in this story. It was a tale of adventure and romance which connected this little land in which they lived with the distant home from which their fathers came. It was a tale about their ancestors and told how rich and honored

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they had been. It presented typical kinds of admirable character; Abraham, the wise and prudent head of a family, thoughtful for the next generation; Eliezer, the faithful household servant, loyal to the interest of his master and the worship of his master's God; Isaac, the obedient son and loving husband; Rebekah, the careful, thrifty, vigorous wife, the efficient head of an Oriental household.

Only a few other traditions gather about the name of Isaac. There is a story of a famine, but Isaac did not, like Abraham the traveler, go to Egypt. He sought food in the near-by territory of Abimelech; and there was a tradition, which seems a duplicate of that about Abraham, that he, too, tried to pass off his beautiful wife as his sister lest his life should be endangered on her account. When the people of the land became jealous of his growing wealth and began a course of petty annoyances, claiming the ownership of wells which Isaac's herdsmen had dug, he retired and dug another. They claimed that also, and once more he peacefully retired and dug another. This well was so far to the south that he was left alone and he said with relief, "Now God has given us room," and settled down. His friendliness had its reward, for the chief Abimelech came to him and proposed a treaty of peace. It so chanced that the same day Isaac's servants came and reported they had found water in a new well they were digging. Isaac made the well a memorial of the covenant with Abimelech, and named it Beersheba, the well of the Oath. In the

story of Abraham there is also an account of the naming of Beersheba, where it is likewise "The Well of the Oath," to commemorate the alliance of Abraham with a chief named Abimelech.

The close of Isaac's life was clouded by the strife of his sons and the favoritism and deceit of his wife. Both sons were obliged, as we shall see later, to leave their father's camp. The stories imply a lonely old age; but this was due, not to his own character, but to that of those around him.

Genesis 24, The journey of Abraham's servant. Genesis 26: 12-33, Isaac and the neighboring chiefs.

## CHAPTER VI

### JACOB THE SELFISH SCHEMER

#### How TROUBLE AROSE IN A DISUNITED HOME

The stories of Jacob give a good illustration of how the old tales changed national history into personal tradition. The stories of Jacob are so human, so true to life, that it is very probable they tell the adventures of a great leader of some of the ancestors of Israel. At the same time the later groupings of the tribes which made up the nation of Israel are plainly symbolized by the accounts of the family of Jacob. The powerful tribes in the center of Israel, Benjamin and the two Joseph tribes Manassah and Ephraim, are said to have descended from Jacob's favorite wife; two groups, one south (Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah), and the other north (Issachar and Zebulun), from his less favored wife; while four outlying tribes containing much Canaanite blood and never very important or very closely bound to the nation, are said to be descendants of slave wives; and in all cases the names of the tribes are given as the personal names of sons of Jacob. There was nothing unusual in this. The same form was used to express the relationship of Arabian tribes, even where the connection was one of alliance rather than of blood. Tribal history was often ex-

pressed by personal stories. At the time when these stories were first put into written form, perhaps shortly after the time of kings David and Solomon, all this national history was forgotten. Those who gathered these popular tales did not stop to question how much was tribal and how much personal.

Two sons, twins, Jacob and Esau, grew up together in the tents of Isaac, so the story went, but they were as different as possible from each other. Jacob was cool, calculating, prudent and not very scrupulous about how he gained his ends. Esau was hasty, impulsive, careless about the future. Jacob stayed by the tents, watching the herds and satisfied to come home every night to a good supper and comfortable bed. Esau wanted wild adventure. He loved hunting and was content to go hungry and to sleep on the lee side of a rock in the desert for the excitement of the chase and the solitary freedom of the wilderness where he could do as he pleased.

Things never went smoothly between the boys. They probably had no patience with each other, and whenever Esau took his bow and went over the hills to hunt in the desert they were both relieved. Soon the antagonism flamed out in a way which had permanent results. Esau came in one day from the hunt, hot and tired and hungry. Jacob was busy over the fire cooking a dish of lentils for supper, and the steaming food smelled good. "Give me some of that food," said Esau, impatiently. "Yes," said Jacob, coolly, "I'll give it — for your birthright?" "You can have the birthright," said Esau. "What is it worth when a man is half dead with hunger?"

It was a bad bargain for the boy. A birthright in the East was a serious matter. It meant headship of the family and a double portion of the inheritance. To care nothing for it showed, not merely that one was improvident and shortsighted for his own interest, but that he ignored the dignity and responsibility of family obligations.

The hearty, impetuous, wayward Esau was his father's favorite. The old chieftain had lost his sight so that he could not see to tell one son from the other but he knew them by their voices or the feel of their hands. One day he called Esau and said, "I am not long for this world. I want to give you my blessing, my son, before I die. Go and bring game and cook it for me and I will give you my blessing." Esau was glad, for the blessing of an old man brought good fortune. But Rebekah, busy in the tent, had heard what Isaac said, and began to scheme how she might get the blessing for her favorite son, Jacob; for Jacob's scheming nature was inherited from his mother. She called Jacob secretly, cooked meat as Isaac loved it, put Esau's clothes on Jacob and sent the boy in to get his father's blessing by a lie. The father lifted up his head as he heard the steps. "Who are you?" "Esau, your oldest," said Jacob. "Come so soon?" Isaac asked in surprise. "Yes. God gave me good success," said Jacob. But the old man thought he detected Jacob's voice. "Are you really Esau?" he asked. "I am," was the reply. "Then bring me the food and I will eat it and bless you." So he ate and drank and blessed his son. A formal bless-

ing or curse was held to have a magical power which, once it was uttered, not the will of gods or men could stay. It was fitting that the blessing should be in verse.

“Peoples shall serve thee,  
Races shall bow to thee.  
Blessed are those who bless thee,  
Cursed are those who curse thee.”

No sooner had Jacob gone than Esau came in with the dish of game from his hunting. “Come and eat of my food and bless me,” he said eagerly. “Who are you?” exclaimed the old man. “Esau,” was the answer, with the voice that left no doubt in his father’s mind. Shaken with emotion the blind old man cried, “Who was it then brought me food and I ate it and gave the blessing to him, and I cannot take it back?” For once Esau’s indifference to the future vanished, and he cried with a loud and bitter cry, “Bless me, even me also, O my father”; but it was of no use. Isaac had given his greatest blessing, and not even he could withdraw it. Jacob must keep the supremacy. It is no wonder that Esau muttered threats. “Wait till my father’s death, and then I will kill him,” he said. The atmosphere of the camp was tense with open hatred after this.

The threats soon came to Rebekah’s ears. Esau, the impulsive, was taking this disaster harder than she had expected. She had overreached herself and had placed her favorite son in danger. She dared not keep Jacob near her. She called him and said, “Esau will kill you. You must go away to my brother Laban and stay a little while till I send

word that it is safe for you to come back." One of the versions of the story made it still more dramatic. The first intrigue led to a second. Rebekah talked to Isaac about how desirable it would be if Jacob could find a wife from their own family, as his father had before him. Why not send Jacob back to her brother, who would look after his interests? The old man, knowing nothing of the real reason, consented to Jacob's going away.

And so Jacob went, and the old mother was left with the husband and the son whom she had tricked; and as the stories were first told neither she nor Isaac ever saw him again.<sup>1</sup>

It is a great event for a boy to go away from home the first time. Jacob climbed up the hills all day long and at sunset was on the summit of the great central ridge of Palestine, at the place later called Bethel, close to one of his grandfather's old camping places. The hilltop is a small limestone plateau strewn with loose bowlders. Here, on what must have seemed to his untraveled eyes the rooftree of the world, he watched the sunset over the lower hills to the west, and then lay down to sleep. The next morning he woke with the consciousness of a dream. The great white stones about had piled themselves into a giant staircase and up and down it had passed before his dazzled eyes messengers of God. The dream meant, so he interpreted it, that God had guided him to sleep on the first night of his journey in a sacred place. He was struck with an unaccus-

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 35: 28-29 belongs to the late priestly collection of stories and laws.

tomed sense of awe. "God is here," he said to himself, "and I knew it not." He set up one of the stones as a memorial, but even in this reverential hour he could not lay aside the impulse to bargain. "If God will prosper me I will come here and worship when I come back."

Just a dream, we say. So it was, but it was the beginning of manhood for him. Manhood never begins until one realizes that there is some great ideal above the life of work and play.

Genesis 25:27-34, Jacob's bargain with Esau. Genesis 27:1-45, Jacob's deceit of Isaac. Genesis 27:46-28:22, Jacob's journey.

## CHAPTER VII

### JACOB IN THE SCHOOL OF LIFE

#### THE TRANSFORMATION OF A SELFISH CHARACTER

Jacob took up his journey over the mountains of Palestine in the light of the vision of God which he had seen at Bethel. At length he came upon the plain of Mesopotamia and one afternoon drew near a group of shepherds with their flocks resting by a well. "Where are you from?" he asked them. "Haran," they replied. Ah! That was the city of which his mother had so often told him. "Do you know Laban?" he asked. "We do," they said, "and here comes his daughter Rachel to water her father's sheep."

The beautiful shepherdess won the heart of her cousin, and the romance of Jacob began, like his mother's, with a chance meeting at a well. Over the mouth of this well was a great stone; for water on this wide plain is precious, and the shepherds took care that no one should draw more than his share. This custom was not familiar to Jacob, and he set his strength to the task and rolled away the stone and drew water for his cousin's flock. She hastened home to tell her father of the young stranger who said he was their kinsman, and Laban came running out to greet Rebekah's son. His greeting was as

cordial as even his mother could have desired, and Jacob found a new home in Laban's household.

Everything worked out as Rebekah had planned. If that shrewd old woman did not know about Laban's daughters before she sent her son to him, she was less familiar with her own family than most Orientals. Laban was as shrewd as she. He saw to it that Jacob made himself useful with the flocks, and after a month he said, "There is no reason why you should work for nothing just because you are a relative. What pay do you want?" "I want Rachel," said Jacob. Now that was what Laban expected him to say, but it never would do to be too eager. He seemed to consider. "It is better to give her to you than to send her out of the family," he said. So they agreed that he should serve seven years for his wife, and wait till the years were over before he married; and those seven years seemed only a few days because of the love he had for her.

There was no trickery and nothing unusual about the bargain. But at the wedding Laban took the veiled bride to the groom, and it was not Rachel, but his oldest daughter, Leah. He protested with indignation to his father-in-law, but the smooth-tongued schemer said, "O, but one must follow the custom. It is the custom to marry off the oldest daughter first. Now, we can arrange this. After Leah's wedding festivities are over you can have Rachel too. Then you can serve seven years more for Rachel." There was nothing for Jacob to do but to consent, however grudgingly.

The years of toil went on. When Jacob completed his service for the bride-price he made a bargain for wages; and he had no scruples about tricking his father-in-law if he could. Laban changed his wages, and he changed his tricks to meet it. God helped him, he said, piously; and his share of the flocks kept growing suspiciously larger. The situation grew strained, till at last Jacob took advantage of Laban's absence at a distant sheep-shearing to pack up his whole household and decamp. Rachel, to do what she could for her husband's future prosperity, stole the images of the family gods and took them along without her husband's knowledge.

The caravan hurried across the Euphrates and over the wide plains to the southwest. Seven days after their flight, when by rapid marches they had already reached the hills that looked toward the Jordan Valley, Laban caught up with the fugitives. It may have been sarcasm or it may have been chagrin which made him say that if Jacob had only been more open with his plans he might have come away with a cordial farewell; but, he added, why did Jacob steal his gods? Jacob protested with truth that he knew nothing of the theft of the gods, and offered to let Laban search for them. Rachel hid them so well that they were not found. Then the indignation of Jacob broke out, and he berated Laban for the insult of the accusation of the theft, after twenty years of faithful, unselfish service and hardship in Laban's niggardly employment.

Laban, still claiming affection for his daughters and their children, proposed a covenant, in which he

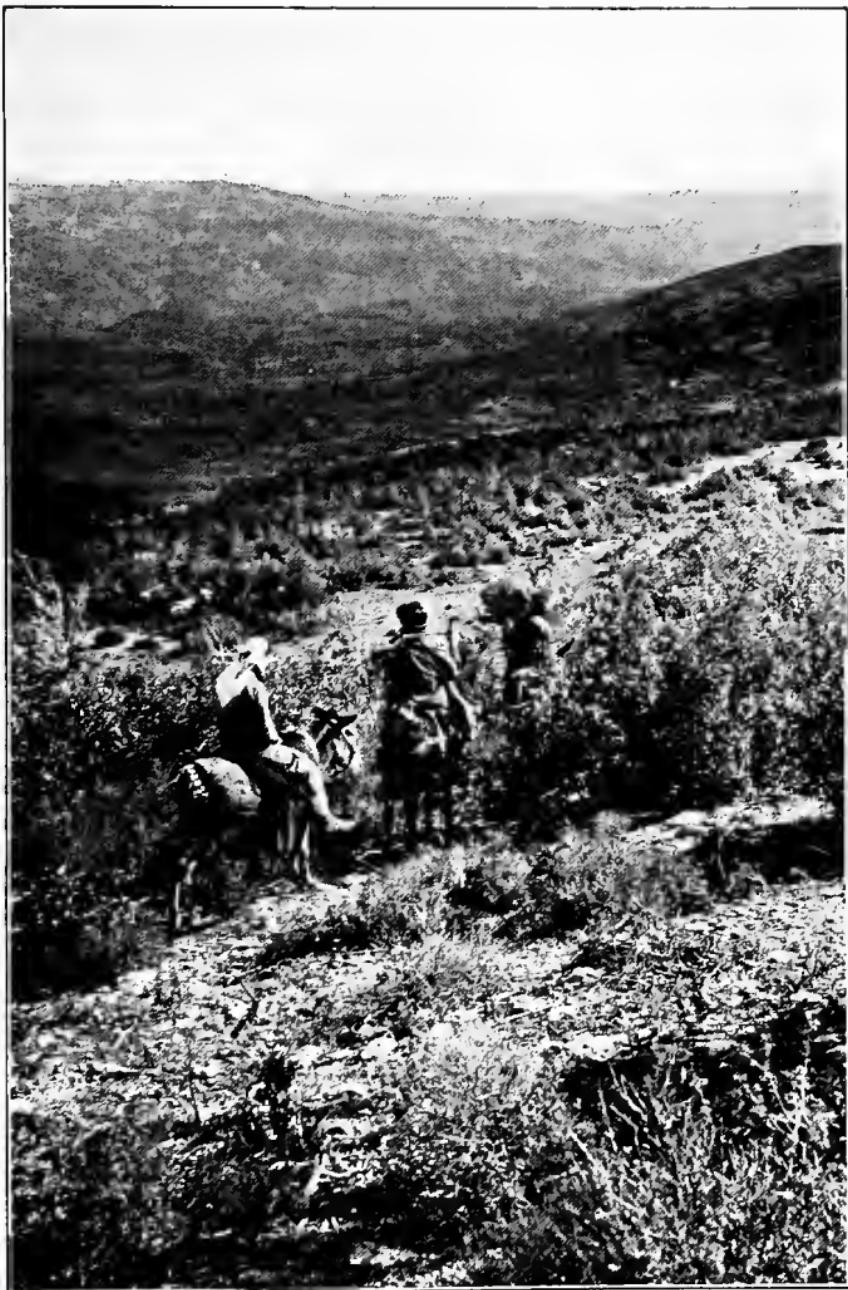
called God to be the avenger if Jacob mistreated his daughters. Like Jacob, Laban was a mixed character. He was capable of placing both his daughters in a position of lifelong trouble in order to get a servant's wage for a few years, but he could not bear to think that they might suffer from the action of others. Self-interest strove with fatherly love. He piled a cairn of stones and called it "Galeed." In the earlier version of the story, with its primitive religious ideas, the heap itself was a sort of god who would watch between the rights of the two covenant parties. A later form of the story calls God to be the witness, and the heap of stones becomes a watchtower, Mizpah, the evidence of the covenant. "Jehovah watch between us," they said; which meant "God keep peace between us; nothing else can," and they bound themselves to stay each on his own side of the line marked by the cairn. This was the story told among the hills on the east of the Jordan about the origin of certain old stone memorials on the borders between Israel and the tribes of the East.

As Jacob neared his old home the memory of the deeds of his youth came back to plague him. He was approaching Esau, the brother whom he had wronged. The impulsive Esau had lost his emnity long ago; but Jacob did not know it. He sent messengers with friendly words, and they soon returned saying that Esau was coming with a force of four hundred men. Jacob was alarmed. He divided his caravan, putting his favorite wife and children in the second division. The next morning he sent

ahead drove after drove from his flocks, and instructed the herdsmen of each to say the same thing when they met his brother's force; "This is a present for my lord Esau." A succession of gifts might appease his anger for that trickery of long ago.

Still Jacob did not feel safe. He woke his caravan in the night and sent both divisions ahead, across the ravine of the Jabbok (the Struggler), the largest stream of the hill country beyond Jordan, while he himself stayed behind. He wanted to be alone and to pray. But in the darkness a man grappled him and they struggled together till the day began to dawn. At first Jacob took him for one of the bandits who infest the stony hills and rob solitary travelers, but after a time Jacob began to suspect that he was more than human, and he strained Jacob's thigh by merely touching it. Now all the ancient world believed in the magic of the name. If one knew the name of any being, god or man, he possessed power over him. "Tell me your name," said Jacob. "No," said his antagonist; but Jacob's persistence at last won, not, indeed, the name of his antagonist, but a blessing, and the change of Jacob's own name from "Supplanter" to "Struggler with God" (Israel). In the dawning light of the morning Jacob crossed the ravine, limping with his strained thigh but saying to himself, "I have seen God face to face, and yet I live."

We see how crude the religious ideas of this strange tradition are. This is not an allegory of a spiritual struggle in a night of prayer. It is a story



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Looking East Among the Hills of Gilead. The Brook Jabbok  
Flows in the Bottom of the Valley



of a real wrestling match, in which a man grappled with God until God wanted him to let go, and the man would not. The man demanded a blessing and obtained it.

Those who put this old tale in the book of Genesis regarded it as marking the crisis of Jacob's life. His discipline was by no means over. Much sorrow still awaited him. But his nobler qualities had now triumphed over the baser. Loneliness, disappointment, hard work, and the love of his wife and little children had made the selfish, egotistical boy into an unselfish, noble-souled man.

The Hebrews found the explanation of three different things in the story; (1) that it was not the Hebrew custom to eat the sinew of the thigh in animals; (2) that their nation had two distinct names, Jacob and Israel; (3) that a place on the Jabbok bore the name "Face of God" (Peniel).

Jacob the cautious met his brother that day, as he rode up the Jordan Valley at the head of his four hundred men, with fear in his heart. But Esau remembered only the playmate of his boyhood. His impulsive nature was willing to let bygones be bygones. They entered upon an oriental rivalry of courtesy, Esau shrinking from the rich gifts and Jacob urging them upon him. Esau proposed to go with his brother's caravan but Jacob, still a little suspicious, made excuses that his caravan, with its flocks and little children, could not travel as fast as Esau's unencumbered company. In the same spirit he declined the proffer of a guard, and the two

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brothers separated. Jacob is said to have settled for a time near his grandfather's old camping ground at Shechem, then to have gone to the region of his boyhood, the pasture lands of Beersheba.

Genesis 29: 1-30, 31: 1-55, Jacob and his relatives. Genesis 32, 33, Jacob and Esau.

## CHAPTER VIII

### JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT

#### THE EDUCATION OF A SPOILED BOY

The story of Jacob now comes back to the old family home in southern Palestine. We can think of his camp as reproducing the scenes of the camps of his father and grandfather — a large group of black tents on the chalky downs, with slow moving flocks and herds guarded by shepherds who sometimes led their cattle far afield in the search for pasturage. In one respect Jacob was richer than the former chiefs of his tribe. He had twelve sons, and that was considered far more important. Most of these were big, stalwart men, off with their father's sheep nearly all of the time. They were the sons of different wives and some bickering went on among them. Two boys, younger than the others, were the sons of Rachel. She was dead, and all the affection of the father was poured on her children. Of course it made jealousy in the motley household. The older of the two, Joseph, now aged seventeen, was his father's favorite, and a spoiled boy, as we might expect. His father got him what our English Bible calls a coat of many colors, but what should be translated, a long tunic with sleeves. It was the sort of garment worn by nobles and wealthy idlers

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in the days when this story was told in Israel.

Joseph began to tell tales on his brothers, which very likely they may have deserved. He began to dream about being superior to all the family, and having his father (the storyteller forgets that his mother is dead, and mentions her too) and his brothers all come and bow down to him, even though a younger son; and he had the lack of tact to tell his foolish dreams. Even his fond father lost patience at this, and his brothers began to hate him. Joseph was on the high road to becoming a selfish, lazy pleasure seeker, a trial to his father and a trouble to the whole family. He was redeemed from it by being roughly thrown out into the world.

The story represents Jacob as still retaining pasture rights at Shechem, far to the north, in central Palestine. The ten older sons of Jacob had driven their flocks there and had been gone so long that their father wanted word from them. He sent Joseph, not to share in their labor, but to bring news about them. Joseph went willingly, but when he came to the fields near Shechem he found that his brothers had gone on down the hills a dozen miles farther, to Dothan, on the wide plain of Esdraelon. He followed them. As he approached, one of the men said with a sneer, "There comes the dreamer." On the spur of the moment a plot was formed to kill him and throw his body into a pit and say that beasts had devoured him; "Then," they said, "we will see what will become of his dreams." What followed seems to have been told in two different ways in different parts of the country.

In central Israel, where the tribe of Reuben lived, the version was that Reuben, intending to save Joseph's life, proposed to put him in a dry cistern, but that in Reuben's absence, the boy was drawn out by a passing caravan of Midianite traders, and Reuben sincerely mourned his loss. As it was told in the tribe of Judah it was Judah who saved his life. Touched with a crude sense of brotherhood, he proposed that they sell him into slavery to a caravan of Ishmaelites instead of killing him. The writer of Genesis combined the two accounts and made a unified story, except for the different names of the trading caravan. They took him up from the cistern, stripped off his gorgeous long sleeved tunic, and sold him into slavery. How he protested, and how his brothers accounted for having a slave to sell, the story leaves to imagination. So the money was paid over — about twelve dollars, possibly a little cheap because the transaction was obviously shady — and the two gangs of scoundrels separated, the merchants marching off with their new bought slave down the coast-road toward Egypt. So the first chapter of Joseph's romantic life closed and the second opened.

As to the brothers, one heartless thing led to another. They killed a kid and smeared the fine tunic with its blood. When they returned home with the flocks, they brought it to their father and said, "We found this. It looks like Joseph's coat. See whether it is or not." Jacob said, "Yes, it is. Some wild beast must have killed him. Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces." The broken-hearted father mourned for his son as dead and refused to

hear any words of comfort. "I shall go to my grave," he said, "bewailing my son."

Meantime the traders, taking roads far to the west of the range of Jacob's herdsmen, followed the caravan route across the desert to Egypt. In the time of Joseph the route was already old and armies and embassies, traders and robbers, nobles and slaves, had for centuries trodden its sands and camped at its scant water-holes.

Among the goods this caravan displayed in the bazaar of the city on the Nile which ended their journey was the young slave, Joseph. His early life in the open must have made him a fine, up-standing, clear-cut youth. The traders soon sold him, doubtless at a good profit, to Potiphar, a high official of the court of Pharaoh.

So here was another change in Joseph's fortunes. Now he, who probably never had slept under a heavier roof than a tentcloth, was thrown into the complexities of an extensive household in the center of an ancient and elaborate civilization. Besides the unfamiliarity of customs and manners, he had the difficulty of a new language to cope with, for the Egyptian was a different tongue from his native Palestinian Semitic.

Yet there were three things he had; an unconquerable cheerfulness, a power of adaptation, and strict integrity. Cheerfulness was necessary to tide him over the terrible loneliness and win the help of other people with the new things he had to learn. Ready adaptation was necessary every hour of the day. Without it he could have been only a kitchen

helper or a donkey driver, always awkward and uncouth in speech and manner. Strict integrity was most necessary of all if he was to be anything but a shifty timeserver.

The story, like most Eastern stories, skips over what must have taken some years of toil and training in faithful service, and only gives the result. Joseph became the trusted superintendent, the major-domo, of his master's household.

All things considered, affairs were not going so badly with Joseph. A slave who, while still a young man, was manager of an important official's household in the capital of Egypt might have a career by no means to be despised. Strange things sometimes happened in Oriental life.

Then suddenly his world went to pieces again. His master's wife, attracted by the handsome youth, tempted him. He refused to betray his master's trust and to sin against God. She, enraged at being rebuffed by a slave, made false accusation against him, and he was disgraced and imprisoned because he would not do wrong. This was the supreme moral test of his life; but he could not have met it without the years of obscure training which lay behind. He was ready to throw away everything external which he had gained rather than to do a wrong.

If Joseph had sat down and moped in a corner of the prison, as many a slave would have done, that would have been the end of his story. His kindly helpfulness and unquenchable cheerfulness saved him. He began to make himself useful, and the

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head of the prison, finding this foreign slave trustworthy and resourceful, made him the unofficial warden of the prison. Once more Joseph had met a difficult situation and mastered it by the force of his character. There was no wonderful genius about it; just the qualities of cheerfulness, adaptability and integrity which any young man may cultivate in himself.

Genesis 37, Joseph sold as a slave. Genesis 39, Joseph, the slave in Egypt.

## CHAPTER IX

### JOSEPH THE PREMIER OF EGYPT

#### HOW A SLAVE BECAME COMMISSIONER OF FOOD CONSERVATION

The next change in the life of Joseph was the most startling of all, but it came about through Joseph's simple kindness of spirit. Two officers high in Pharaoh's court, who might be called the Lord High Butler and the Lord High Baker, had fallen into disgrace and been imprisoned. Oriental courts have always been noted for rapid changes of fortune. A man was often a prince one day and a pauper the next; and fortunate if he kept his head on his shoulders.

One morning Joseph found them sad, and asked the reason. They had each dreamed a dream which they thought must have a meaning, but, being prisoners, they could not summon an interpreter of dreams to tell them the meaning.

"The interpretation of dreams comes from God," said the kindly warden, "tell me your dreams."

The chief butler said that he had dreamed of a vine with three branches, bearing grapes, and he, restored to his old position, gave the wine from the grapes to Pharaoh. "The three branches are three days," said Joseph, "and in three days you will be

restored to your old position. Do not forget me when you come again into power."

Then the chief baker told his dream gladly. It also was a dream of three; three baskets on his head, and in the upper basket all sorts of cakes for Pharaoh, but the birds were flying about and eating the cakes. His interpretation was not so happy. "The three baskets are three days," said Joseph, "and in three days you will be taken from prison and hung and your body given to the birds."

According to the story, all this happened to the two prisoners. But when the chief butler was back in power again, he did not find it convenient to do anything for the Syrian slave in prison. The story is charitable, and says he forgot him. Perhaps so. People who have had a rise in the world do sometimes succeed in forgetting their humble friends.

Two years passed. They went quickly enough with the official in the court, but they must have dragged wearily with the slave, waiting in the prison for the action of his faithless friend. At last there arose a great commotion in court. Pharaoh himself had dreamed a dream and had called the official interpreter of dreams to tell its meaning. A dream of the Pharaoh was important; and this particular dream was curiously double, and, what made it more important, was about the Nile, which was itself a god, and cows, which were sacred animals.

There was great buzzing of gossip in the court, and all the courtiers knew that the Pharaoh had dreamed a dream which the magicians acknowledged they were unable to understand. The situation was

serious. Then the chief butler went to the Pharaoh. He ventured to call up the past, even if at risk to himself, and plainly told the story of his dream in prison and of the Syrian slave who gave the right meaning. "Bring him here," said Pharaoh, and the court messengers hastened to bring the new magician. Soon, shaved and dressed as was fitting for court presentation, he was brought before the Pharaoh. "I am told that when you hear a dream you can interpret it," said the Pharaoh. "Not I," was the reply. "God only can give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

Then the dream was told by Pharaoh. Seven fat cows were feeding by the Nile, and seven lean cows, leaner than any ever seen in Egypt, ate up the fat cows, and still were as lean as ever. He awoke, then slept and dreamed again. Seven full, heavy ears of grain were eaten up by seven thin and shriveled ears.

Joseph gave an interpretation. "God in his goodness has shown Pharaoh what he will do. Both dreams mean the same. Seven years of good crops will come, then seven years of famine. Let the government take a policy of food conservation and lay aside a fifth of the crops in the years of plenty for the years of famine."

The court saw the practical wisdom of the proposal, and Joseph was made "commissioner of food control." Pharaoh placed his signet in Joseph's hand. This gave him power to sign edicts with the Pharaoh's authority. He clothed him in royal garments, hung a gold chain about his neck, made him ride in the second chariot, and sent couriers before

him to summon the people to pay homage, and set him over all the land. How the story-tellers in the Hebrew villages reveled in these details of a splendor remote from their simple life!

Joseph identified himself with his new surroundings, took a high sounding Egyptian name, as was customary upon great promotions — Zaphenath-paneah, meaning, perhaps, "The God speaks and he lives" — and made a marriage appropriate to his new position, to the daughter of a priest at the neighboring shrine of On.

At On there had been for centuries a famous temple of the sun-god Re, and the city is better known in history by its Greek name Heliopolis, The City of the Sun. Its ruins stand on the edge of the fertile country, west of the old capital Memphis. Here were huge inscribed obelisks set up to symbolize the rays of the sun. They are older than the time of Joseph.

These great obelisks have had a curious history. More than a thousand years after Joseph's time, when the Romans ruled Egypt, Heliopolis fell into decay, and four of these obelisks were taken, with great labor, to adorn the city of Alexandria, on the coast of Egypt. Cleopatra's needles, they came to be called. Later one was taken to Constantinople, one to Rome, one, in 1877, to London, and at last, by the gift of the Egyptian government, one in 1881 to New York, where it stands in Central Park, near the Metropolitan Museum. One of the great obelisks still stands in the ruins of Heliopolis, as it

did when Joseph, according to the story, married the daughter of a priest of Re at the old shrine.

Joseph's new position was not one of idleness. On the contrary, never had he been called on to work so hard. He was to buy all the grain he could for seven years and store it in the nearest cities, in great brick granaries like those pictured on Egyptian monuments; and between greedy dealers, grafting subordinates and the high officials of a court never famous for its honesty, Joseph's seven years' task was not an easy one.

Then came the seven years of famine. Famine was common in many parts of the East, but very rare in Egypt. The fertility of that country depends upon the Nile, which rises each year and floods the low-lying land. It is these flooded lands which constitute the fertile soil of Egypt. Everything beyond is desert. When the Nile floods failed Egypt had a famine; but that has rarely happened. Usually, when droughts brought famine to surrounding lands, Egypt had the usual crops. The droughts which could affect Egypt were far to the south, in the region of the great lakes of central Africa and in Abyssinia, regions scarcely known to the Egyptians. In the twelfth and seventeenth dynasties, between two thousand and fifteen hundred years before Christ and in the eleventh and again in the twelfth centuries after Christ famines came; and the first, like that in the Joseph stories, lasted seven years.

An Arabic historian, writing of the famine in the twelfth century after Christ gives a picture of what

he saw. "The poor ate carrion, corpses, dogs. They even devoured little children. . . . A traveler often passed through a large village without seeing a single living inhabitant. . . . In one village, where there had been four hundred homes of weavers, the weavers lay within their houses dead, men, women and children."

From the worst horrors of famine the people of Joseph's time were saved by the policy of food conservation. When the famine began Joseph opened the granaries and sold food to all who came. Soon he had all the cash of the country in the royal treasury. When the money was gone he offered food in exchange for the cattle, and before the year was over all the cattle and sheep and horses and asses were the property of the government. Then the people sold their land, and at last themselves, for food to eat and, at the end, for seed to sow. The Egyptian peasantry thus became landless serfs of the crown, giving a fifth of the crops into the royal treasury. The priests, however, were supported by the government, so they did not have to sell their land.

Palestine was a land of small farmers owning their own fields. The Hebrews had heard of the very different land system in Egypt and connected the beginning of that system with the tradition of Joseph. The land tenure in Egypt, they liked to believe, showed the great power which one of their own race once held in the ancient empire on the Nile.

Genesis 40, Courtiers in prison. Genesis 41, The slave became the premier.

## CHAPTER X

### JOSEPH AND HIS FAMILY

#### HOW A GREAT-HEARTED MAN REQUITED GOOD FOR EVIL

The drought far off to the south of Egypt, which had lowered the level of the Nile, had also spread to the lands east and west. The report went among the shepherds of Palestine that in Egypt there was food for sale. Jacob, now an old man, but still the vigorous head of his tribe, heard it, and when no one in the camps or towns in Palestine had food to sell, called his sons and sent them down to Egypt to buy grain. "All go except Benjamin," he said. "I cannot let him go. Some harm might happen to him."

Benjamin was the younger brother of Joseph. They were the only sons of Jacob's beloved wife Rachel, and when Joseph had disappeared years ago the fond old man's affection had clung about Benjamin. The lad had openly been his father's favorite, but whether he was more tactful than Joseph or whether the older brothers had been sobered by the sad results of their jealousy, they harbored no hatred against Benjamin.

The ten sons of Jacob, with what money they could spare from the family store in the tents, a train of asses, and servants to care for the caravan, started

down the coast road across the desert to Egypt. They must have thought often of how twenty years ago they sent their brother on the long journey down this same road, and must have wondered what had become of him.

The uncouth shepherds may have been somewhat timid about entering the borders of Egypt, but things fell out worse than their greatest fears. There were fortresses on all the desert roads into Egypt, and no caravan got past without inspection. These men, who professed to be coming to buy grain, were allowed to come in but were taken before Joseph himself as suspicious foreigners who should be investigated. This Egyptian prince was the greatest man they had ever seen, and they knelt, confused and overawed, and touched their foreheads to the ground before him. Joseph knew them; but he was too clever to put himself in their power and too kindly to take vengeance. What he did had two purposes: to find out about his father, and to test his brothers. If they proved to be as heartless and unscrupulous as they were twenty years before, he would have to deal with them differently from what he would otherwise. In any case they must not know who he was. This was not difficult. They may have looked curiously at the slaves who passed them bearing burdens in the street to see if one of them might not resemble Joseph, but they would never look for him under the robes of the premier of Egypt.

These men being obviously Semites from somewhere to the east of Egypt, the premier sent for his official interpreter to turn his Egyptian into the

tongue of the barbarians, and began questioning the scared shepherds; but they needed no interpreter to translate his black looks and harsh tones. They began to tell their story — how they had come from Canaan to buy food — but he interrupted them. " You are spies," he said, " come to find out the weak spots of the defenses, now that famine is on us." " No," they protested. " We have come to buy food. We are all brothers. We are honest men. We are not spies." " Spies you are," growled the obstinate official. The men were thoroughly scared. If their story was not believed, where would they be? They had nothing but their own word to offer, and, in the characteristic Eastern way, they began volubly to tell all about themselves and their family. This was exactly what Joseph wanted. He found out that his father was still living, that his younger brother was at home with his father, and that he, Joseph, was supposed to be dead. As for them, their scared faces revealed little except terror. They must be made to show their characters.

An Eastern official with despotic power can be very stubborn on occasion. " Just as I said, you are spies," retorted Joseph. " Now I will prove it. By the life of Pharaoh, you do not go out of Egypt unless I see that brother. One of you may go and bring him and the rest stay confined here till he comes." Then to give them plenty of chance to think it over he put them in prison for three days. At the end of that time he called them again and gave them more favorable terms. If they would leave one in Egypt, the rest might go back with food

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and bring their youngest brother to show the truth of their words. They agreed readily enough, and, all unconscious that Joseph could understand their Palestinian speech, began to say, "This trouble has come to us because we closed our ears to the pleadings of our brother when he was in trouble." Reuben said, "If you had only listened to me! but you would not." Their remorse moved Joseph to tears, but he turned away that they should not know how tender a heart was hidden under his harsh bearing. Then he bound Simeon, the second oldest — he would spare Reuben the oldest — and sent the others off with their grain sacks full of food. They also carried, unknown to themselves, the bags of money they had brought to buy grain, stowed away in the tops of the sacks.

It was with mingled feelings of relief and dread that they told the tale of their adventures to their father, but when they found their money, which they had put in the hands of the Egyptian official, in their own grain sacks, they were frightened.

Between the dread of returning to Egypt and Jacob's fierce determination not to let Benjamin go, the time dragged on till the food was once more gone, while Simeon lay in prison in Egypt.

There were long discussions over a second trip. At last, persuaded that the journey would be useless without Benjamin, Jacob reluctantly gave his consent. They took gifts of the luxuries of the country, such as a little wild honey and balsam and pistachio nuts and almonds, and went back to Egypt with fear and trembling.

The story, interested in the fortunes of the anxious brothers and the broken-hearted old father, quite forgets to tell us the thoughts of the premier of Egypt, outwardly so engrossed in the affairs of state, as time for the journey passed and the brothers did not appear. At last one day, among the groups in his court, he spied the timid and anxious faces of the Syrian shepherds; and among them one whom he knew must be Benjamin. He did not dare trust himself before the crowd but had them taken to his house. It is no wonder that they were afraid when in their uncouth and travelstained garments they were ushered into the unaccustomed luxury of this noble's house. They all hastened to tell the steward that they had not stolen the money, they only found it in their sacks and had brought it back — a story unlikely on its face. But the steward dismissed the subject. "The money you found must have been a gift from your God. I had what you paid me;" and he brought in Simeon and told the confused and puzzled little company that they were to have the honor of dining with the premier. They hastily prepared as best they could, laid out their little country gifts and waited his coming with troubled hearts.

Fancy the eagerness Joseph's stately leisure concealed when he came in. "The old man you told me about, your father — is he alive? Is he well?" "Is this your youngest brother?" "God bless you, my son," he said, and then he could say no more, and went to his room where he could give way to his feelings. At dinner he was again the haughty Egyptian noble, looking down from his upper table

and singling out the younger brother in the dishes of food sent down to them. But here again something uncanny happened. The brothers were seated in exact order of birth, and how should the servants be able to do that?

There was no delay this time. Their sacks were speedily filled, and when the next morning's sun arose they were already on the road to the desert. They were astounded when the steward came riding up and berated them for stealing his master's divining cup. They pledged their lives on their innocence, but to their amazement the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. It was a perplexed and saddened company who were brought back into Joseph's presence.

Joseph offered the scared and humbled shepherds freedom and proposed to keep Benjamin, the seeming culprit, as a slave. Would they abandon Benjamin to his fate for the sake of their own safety? It was a marvelously clever test of character. Then Judah spoke. He told why his aged father loved Benjamin above all the rest; told how they had pled with him to allow Benjamin to come, and now, he said, they could not go back and leave their father's beloved son in Egypt. Let him, Judah, stay as a slave, and the old father have his favorite son. It was a noble plea, full of tender affection and unselfish devotion.

The test was ended. There was no need of further delay. "Leave us alone," Joseph cried, and the steward and police and clerks and interpreters all

went out, leaving the frightened shepherds alone in the great judgment hall with the premier. Then the great officer came down from his high seat, dropped his haughty bearing, dropped his Egyptian speech, and in the language of his boyhood made himself known to his astounded brothers; and the strong men wept together.

The rest of the life of Joseph is told more briefly. Each step in it shows the nobility of his character. His reconciliation with his brothers was in the second year of the famine, and he brought his father and all the encampment down to Egypt. He gained permission from Pharaoh for them to settle in Goshen, a land of wide plains in the east of Egypt, between the Nile and the Isthmus of Suez, near the road by which they came from Palestine. Here Jacob died, and his body was brought back to Hebron and buried in the cave which Abraham had bought for a burial place. After his death the brethren were afraid that, now their father was gone, Joseph would avenge his old wrongs on them, and they came saying that their father had told them to ask his forgiveness. "Forgive?" he said, "You were forgiven long ago. It has all worked out for good."

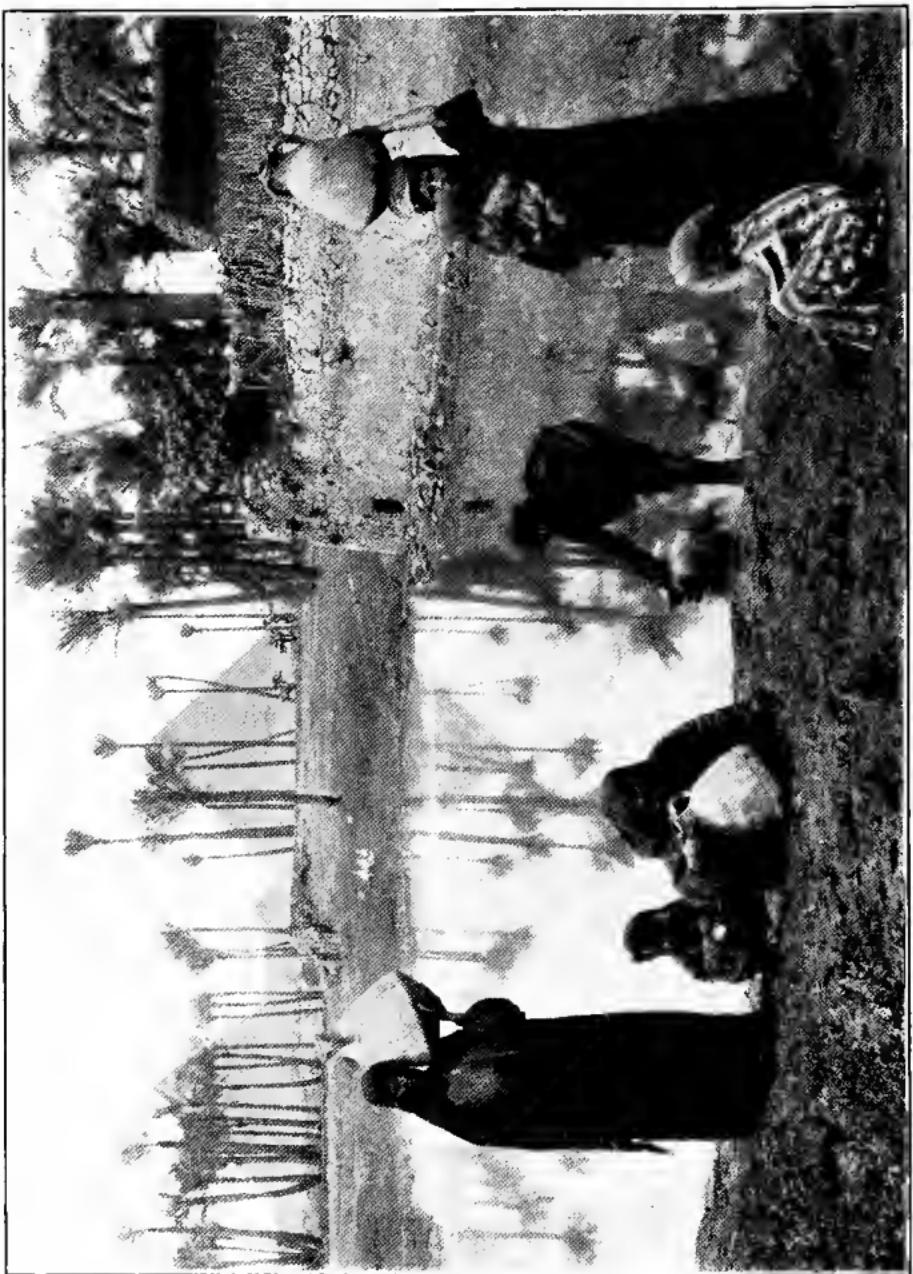
The Egyptians regarded a hundred and ten years as the ideal lifetime. Tradition said that Joseph reached that age. Had he not clung to his ideals his life might easily have been wrecked by his troubles. He refused to let those ideals go, and his reward was honor and long life and loyal sons and the consciousness that his life had been of use.

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Genesis 42, The first journey of Joseph's brothers to Egypt. Genesis 43: 1-44: 3, The second journey. Genesis 44: 4-45: 15, The premier and his shepherd brothers. Genesis 45: 16-46: 7, 47: 1-12, The reunited family. Genesis 50: 15-26, The death of Joseph.



A Pool near the Banks of the Nile not far from the Ancient City of Memphis



## CHAPTER XI

### EGYPT

#### THE LAND MADE BY A RIVER

So much of the stories of the old heroes in Israel is laid in Egypt that it is worth while to turn aside for some special study of this land and its people.

Egypt is like no other country in the world. Most countries depend for fertility upon rain. Egypt has little or no rain, except along the sea on the northern border. Instead of carrying water from the land, its one river brings water to it. The Nile rises in the mountains and lakes of Eastern Africa and flows for over two thousand miles through a desert. Every year it overflows, after the rainy season on the upper Nile, and floods the low lands near its banks, dropping a sediment of black earth from its muddy waters. Egypt — the Egypt which yields crops and is inhabited — is simply the flooded land along the river. Everything else is desert.

The whole course of the Nile through Nubia and Egypt is in a valley which the river made for itself ages ago. For three hundred miles above Cairo, through most of ancient Egypt, the valley is from ten to fifteen miles wide, and the rock through which it is cut is limestone. Above that is harder sandstone, and the valley averages less than two miles wide.

Sometimes the river washes the foot of the western cliffs. Below Cairo the Nile branches, and goes to the sea by two main mouths. In ancient times there were seven mouths, but most of them have become filled up. The three-cornered piece of land enclosed by the mouths of the river is the delta of the Nile, so called from the Greek letter Δ. Its width at the shore is 155 miles, and its length up the river, about 100 miles. Once it was a great bay of water, now it is a great bay of marsh and fertile land. In the days of early Bible history it was mostly marsh, full of pools and slow, winding streams where the nobles hunted wild fowl among the tall reeds.

If Egypt were laid on the map of New England and reversed, so that the seashore lay to the south instead of the north, with the western corner of the delta at New York, the eastern corner would reach to Narragansett Bay, the northern point of the delta about to the northern border of Massachusetts. This was lower Egypt. Upper Egypt, the ribbon of green up the Nile, would reach up the Connecticut River to its head and on into Canada half way to Quebec. The whole fertile area is about the size of Maryland, a little larger than New Hampshire, about one-tenth smaller than Belgium. It has a very dense population; at present over twelve millions, while Maryland has about one and a third millions. In the times of the Hebrew residence in Egypt the population must have been smaller, for much of the delta was given over to marshes, and there was also left unoccupied land on which the shepherds from the East were allowed to settle.

The people lived in towns and villages, strung up the Nile valley like pearls on a string.

Geography has more to do with the growth of civilization than we are apt to think. On a great, level expanse of country, when people become too numerous in any one place they simply scatter. That is not the way for civilization to grow. Civilization begins with specialization of labor, where each man learns to do some one thing better than most others can do it. If the people of a region became so many that the country would not support them in the way they had lived, and if they could not simply strike their tents and move off to some unoccupied region, then they were obliged to learn new ways. Specialization of labor arose, and civilization began.

Two of the earliest civilizations of the world arose in river valleys shut in by deserts or mountains so that emigration was not easy; Babylonia and Egypt. Both built cities, formed governments and developed writing before 4000 B. C. How much earlier the civilization had begun to grow, no one is able to say. When the Hebrews went into Egypt, perhaps between 1400 and 1300 B. C., Egypt was already very old — older than the famous days of Greece and Rome are to us. Where the Syrian road came to the Nile stood the ancient capital, Memphis, near the present Cairo. From Memphis the Hebrew shepherds who journeyed to the city could look across the river, as one can from Cairo to-day, and see the great pyramids, already about 1500 years old. They had stood there five times as long as from the landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock

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until the present. Up the river sailed boats with single masts and one large sail, bearing wheat and fowl and lambs and melons and vegetables of many kinds, and sometimes a consignment of slaves. Down the river the boats brought granite blocks for building, and some products of the southern region. Galleys loaded with soldiers went past, now and then a royal barge bore the Pharaoh himself to make a journey about his dominions.

But remember that all this was on the Nile. Most of the Hebrews seldom saw it. They lived farther east, where they could pitch their tents and pasture their herds on the margin of the desert. They spoke their own language and followed the customs of their shepherd fathers, and the cultured Egyptians looked down on them as uncivilized barbarians. Other Semitic shepherd tribes were, as inscriptions show, also allowed to come into the eastern part of Egypt.

The history of ancient Egypt may be divided into Early Egypt, before 2980 B.C.; the Old Kingdom, 2980–2475 B.C.; a period of chaos, 2475–2160 B.C.; the Middle Kingdom, 2160–1788 B.C.; the Hyksos rule, 1788–1580 B.C.; The New Empire, 1580—about 1150 B.C.; The Period of Decline, 1150–525 B.C., at the end of which it was captured by Persia. The history is also divided into the rule of twenty-six dynasties.

The time when the Hebrews came into Egypt has been much discussed. The traditions about the Egyptian story took shape so much later that the people had forgotten how long their sojourn lasted.

One of the earlier collections of traditions suggests four generations, which would be between a hundred and a hundred and fifty years (Gen. 15:16). Another later version of the tradition makes it four hundred and thirty years (Ex. 12:40), and both these estimates are repeated in different places. On the whole, the earlier versions of the story, with the shorter periods, seem the most probable. In that case the Hebrew shepherds came into Egypt in one of the most splendid periods of the empire. The armies of Egypt were fighting in Nubia. Great temples were being built at various places along the Nile. Palestine had long belonged to Egypt, and about this time the Pharaohs took as their wives princesses from the kingdoms of Syria.

The later nation of Israel was a collection of tribes who spoke the same language and were related in blood. As they came together into a nation, they all contributed the traditions of their early history and wove them together as though their ancestors had all gone through the same experiences. During the latter part of the stay of the Hebrews in Egypt, three Pharaohs, Seti I, Ramses II, and Merneptah left inscriptions telling of campaigns in Palestine. Merneptah made a campaign in Palestine, about which a song of triumph has come down,

“The Hittite Land is pacified.  
Plundered is Canaan, with every evil,  
Carried off is Askelon, seized upon is Gezer,  
Yenoam is made as a thing of nought,  
Israel is desolated, her seed is not,  
Palestine is become a widow for Egypt.

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All lands are united, they are pacified,  
Every one that is turbulent is bound by King  
Merneptah."

This shows that some people known as Israel were already in Palestine and contributed troops to the enemies of Egypt. Evidently not all the tribes of the later nation shared in the Egyptian experience.

Many inscriptions of great interest have been found in Egypt, but, as yet, none which mentions the Hebrews as living there. That is not surprising. Inscriptions had to do with kings and nobles, not with despised foreign tribes.

For a long time everything in Israel went peacefully. Men were born and grew old and died and the greatest excitement of their lives was an occasional journey to a town near by, after the sheep-shearing, to sell wool. Now and then they heard of Egyptian armies going past on the great road to Palestine but what it was all about they neither knew nor cared.

Meantime great things were happening in Egypt. There was an attempt of an emperor, Ikhnaton, to change the form of religion, but the priests of the old faith were too strong. A period of political confusion followed, and the eighteenth dynasty, to which he belonged, lost power. The nineteenth dynasty produced two great emperors, Seti I and Ramses II. Ramses reigned 67 years. He went to Palestine and fought a great battle against the Hittites, who were trying to form an empire on the ruins of the Egyptian power in Syria. He conquered, but the need of keeping watch over affairs in

Syria led him to leave the old capital at Thebes, three hundred miles up the Nile, and come down to the delta.

This move had grave consequences for the Hebrews. The Egyptians began to reclaim the swamps in the delta and to push out into the lands to the east, till now left largely to the shepherd tribes. The emperor wished to fortify and place garrisons along the eastern frontier. He built a store city in Goshen, Pithom, "The House of Atum." He also built near it a city called after his own name, Per-Ramses, "The House of Ramses." Forts were built along the Palestine road. For all these works the government needed labor. What was easier than to impress the foreigners who had been allowed to live in the land? Egypt had long used a system of forced labor, and now the Hebrews became, under its burden, little better than slaves. Moreover, the fact that they were Asiatic foreigners made them feared. The most dangerous enemies of Egypt were Asiatics. It would be well to see that such tribes as the Hebrews did not become too strong; so, tradition said, the government determined that all Hebrew male-children should be killed at birth; but, the story adds, those to whom the orders were given revolted at the barbarity and did not obey.

## CHAPTER XII

### MOSES IN TRAINING

### THE EDUCATION OF A LEADER

The Pharaoh had ordered that all Hebrew boy babies should be killed. When Moses was born his mother hid him for three months, but every day brought its dangers. A hundred times her heart was in her mouth lest some one should discover the sex of her baby and reveal it to the government. At last her mother-love formed a daring and ingenious plan. She wove a little basket of papyrus reed, made it water-tight with bitumen, put the baby in it, and hid it among the reeds along the Nile, at the place where the daughters of Pharaoh came down to bathe. The older sister was left to watch and see what happened.

It was a desperate chance, but it succeeded. The Pharaoh's daughter spied the little basket, sent a maid to fetch it, and, opening it, found a baby crying with hunger and loneliness. She saw it was a Hebrew, but her woman's heart had pity on it, which was just what the child's mother had hoped would happen. The sister, strolling past as though by accident, asked if she should not get a Hebrew nurse for the baby, and, of course, brought the mother who consented, perhaps with show of hesita-

tion, to take the child home and care for it. So the boy became the princess' foster child, and the mother was paid out of court funds for nursing her own baby; a touch of humor such as Eastern story-tellers love. The princess did not forget the baby. Later on she had him brought to the court and reared him as her foster son.

There is a certain simplicity about this story which shows that it took its present form among a people to whom the elaborate ceremonials of the Egyptian court were unfamiliar. Here the Hebrews do not all live in Goshen, east of the delta. This family lives in the same town with the court, on the banks of the Nile. Probably those who told the story thought of its scene at Memphis, which was the capital through much of Egyptian history. The daughter of Pharaoh is spoken of as though she was the only one. In fact, Ramses II had many daughters. Moses' sister, though a girl of the despised foreign race, mingles with the princess' maids and addresses the princess herself in a most democratic way. The child was named Moses by the princess, because, she said, she drew him out — *mashah*, in Hebrew, draw out — from the water, as though this Egyptian princess spoke Hebrew. The name was probably Egyptian and seems to be connected with a word for child, *mesu*, which often appears as a part of Egyptian names. An emperor, for example, was named Thothmes, the son of the god Thoth. Popular stories often explain foreign names in terms of the native language.

Education in the upper circles of Egyptian society

was not a round of holidays. No civilization can endure which does not call for hard study from its youths. Egypt had an elaborate system of writing, and the officials of the court were expected to be expert in it. The country was governed by a complicated bureaucracy, with grades of officers. Military science had advanced to a stage that called for skilled experts in the army. Religion was in the hands of the priesthood, but the officials of the court were of necessity familiar with much ritual and mythology. It was a time when every man had his specialty and no one can suppose that this foundling adopted into the court would be permitted to laze away the years of his youth. In the busy court of Pharaoh at this time of stern foreign wars, building activities, new fortifications and expanding policies of empire, an idle young foreigner would have had short shrift from the energetic active men in control of affairs under Seti I or Ramses II. He must have sometimes wished that he could be a common boy again and leave his tablets and be off with the other boys, free from the trammels of a court education.

The great moral crisis of Moses' life came when he had to decide whether he would live as an Egyptian or as a Hebrew. To be sure, he was a foreigner. But the Egypt of that day was somewhat cosmopolitan. Many Asiatics of various races had found homes there. There is no reason to suppose that he could not have had an honorable career as an Egyptian official had he so chosen. It must have been a temptation. Any energetic, active young man with his training would have been drawn toward

public life. A later Hebrew tradition, given by Josephus, made Moses an officer in the Egyptian army, brilliantly successful in a war with Nubia. There is not the least ground for the tradition, but it suggests the career that might have opened to Moses had he chosen.

But Moses could not forget that he was a Hebrew. He found that, after all, his sympathies were with his own people. This was not strange. His early years had been spent in a Hebrew home; and the influence of an early home is very strong, no matter how much it may be overlaid by later education.

Whether his choice was slowly and deliberately made or whether his sympathy flashed out in a sudden, unpremeditated act, one cannot say. Either explanation would be a natural one for the story. One day he was watching the labor of the Hebrew serfs and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. His national feeling flamed out in a sudden blow, and the Egyptian fell dead. Probably Moses never intended to kill him; but what was done, was done. It was a serious matter, for Egypt was not the lawless desert. The courts were strict with those who took the law into their own hands, especially when the victim was an Egyptian. The only thing to do was to conceal his hasty deed; and he hurriedly buried the body in the sand and hastened away.

The man he had rescued was indiscreet enough to tell the story, doubtless in gratitude to Moses, and it soon became known among the Hebrews. On another day Moses found two Hebrews quarreling. He attempted to make peace, but one of them turned

on him and said, "Who made you judge? Will you kill me, as you did the Egyptian?" Almost as quickly the rumor had spread to the court, and Moses had to flee for his life. The government would not deal lightly with a man who might be setting up as the leader of a slave rebellion.

It was with a heavy heart that this young man from the court, in the disguise of a Hebrew peasant's dress, with a meager bundle of baggage and some money concealed in his belt, got permission of a caravan leader to join his caravan going back to the east from Egypt. He had been willing to give up his Egyptian career in the hope of doing something for his own people, but his first attempt to champion them had resulted in nothing but failure. It must have added to his discomfort that his failure was all his own fault. He had been foolishly rash, and so he, the would-be rescuer of his people, was going away from them, a fugitive, discredited and useless. Fancy how, as he lay on the sand looking up at the stars at night, he must often have called himself a silly fool. He had failed, and he deserved to fail.

Moses did not dare to go back into Palestine. That was under the control of Egypt and Moses could not have remained long hidden. His only refuge was among the wandering tribes in the no-man's-land of Northern Arabia. He abandoned whatever caravan he may have started with, and, too poor to be worth robbing, picked his way from well to well of the half desert country between Palestine and the eastern gulf of the Red Sea. One night,

when sunset was calling the flocks home, he sat by a well near an encampment of Midianites. The daughters of the priest of the tribe came to the well with their father's flocks, as long before Rachel had come with her father's. While they were filling the troughs shepherds came up and drove them away so that they might water their own sheep first. Moses, with ready chivalry, took the maidens' part and helped them water their flocks in spite of the churlish ruffians. The story has its touch of romance. The deed of courtesy won for him a home and employment, and one of the maidens whom he championed became his wife.

The story-tellers do not pretend that the change was a welcome one. It was not so much the question of soft clothes and dainty fare. He may have been ready to exchange these for the desert sheepskin and the handful of dates. He may even have found the directness and simplicity of the shepherd camp not a bad exchange for the ceremonials of court society. The hard thing must have been that he had to lay aside his ambition to help his people. He buried this ambition in the grave of lost hopes when he consented to become the son-in-law of his employer. Perhaps he thought that his hasty action showed him to be unworthy of his high ambitions.

There are two ways of taking failure. The shallow man treats it as final. If he can not do what he wants, then there is no use in trying to do anything. The strong man regards failure, not as final, but as an incident in progress. If one road is

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blocked he looks around to find another. If he can not do a big thing he will be content to do a small thing; and that is the way this fine old story shows Moses taking his failure.

Exodus 1:8-14, The Hebrews in Egypt. Exodus 2, The romantic story of Moses' youth.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MOSES THE DELIVERER

#### THE STORY OF A VISION AND A CONFLICT

As Moses dwelt with his flocks in the wide, silent stretches of the wilderness, he thought much of his nation and of what he had wanted to do for them. Now and then he heard about matters in Egypt, and always the report was that things were growing worse. When men live much alone and their minds become absorbed in some great subject it often happens that they have visions. So, the tradition says, Moses had a vision. He saw a common thorn bush of the desert glowing as though its dry branches were all on fire, and yet it did not burn up. He turned to look at it, when the voice of God spoke to him.

In the East the mark of reverence was, and still is, to take off the shoes. "Take thy shoes from off thy feet, for this place is holy ground," said the voice. Then he felt within himself that God, the God of his fathers, called him to go back and lead Israel out from Egypt. He hesitated. How could he even make his own people believe in his message? Then God gave him confidence in his brother, Aaron; and promised that he would not be alone in his work.

This is the story of a great spiritual experience. It is not told in abstract terms, as it would be to-day,

but in the glowing imagery of poetic symbolism, which religious literature has always loved.

This experience gave Moses not only a new conception of duty, but a new conception of God. One of the two earlier versions of the tradition describes it as the revelation of a new name of God. This is the name Yahweh, Jehovah in our English Bible; "He is," the existent, powerful God. When God himself speaks the name he says, not "He is," but "I am." "Go to the people," said he, "and say *I am* has sent you." The other early version of the Hebrew stories used the name Yahweh from the beginning, and so does not regard it as introduced by Moses. The latest version of the stories, usually called the priestly version, also makes Moses introduce the name Yahweh, and in this version God says plainly, "I was known to your fathers as El Shaddai (God Almighty), but by my name Yahweh was I not known." (Ex. 6: 23.) Evidently there was a very persistent memory in Israel that the name Yahweh was introduced in the time of Moses..

To know the name of a God, in the ancient world, was to be able to appeal to his power. The new name of God which Moses had gained was the symbol of a power of God. The Hebrews could appeal to this new name and draw from a new reservoir of divine strength which their fathers had not known.

So with his new sense of God and his new feeling of a mission, Moses brought back his sheep to the camp and asked of his father-in-law permission to take his wife and children and go back to Egypt. Moses' family knew where he had fled; and Aaron,

moved by an impulse which seemed to the brothers the direct guidance of God, had started to see him. The two met in the wilderness at a mountain held sacred as a shrine of God. Moses found in Aaron a sympathetic soul and through the rest of their lives, with one notable exception, the two brothers worked together as leaders of the people. They supplemented each other excellently. Moses was the executive, a quiet, diligent personality who furnished the plan and inspiration of their activity. Aaron was bold, outspoken, with a compelling voice and personality which made the king himself listen when he spoke.

When the two brothers came to Egypt they called the leaders of Israel together and said that God had sent them to redeem the people. It was welcome news to the Hebrews and they were ready to worship this God with the new name. Perhaps, in the long generations, the worship of the God of their fathers had died out.

The nation seems also to have lost its power of action. Once they had stayed in Egypt because it was easier than to go back to Palestine. Now they had to stay because they had no leaders who dared to take them out of Egypt. Moses and Aaron asked permission for the Hebrews to go out of Egypt into the eastern desert and sacrifice to their God. They were curtly refused. Still worse, Pharaoh regarded this request as proof that the people were not working hard enough. The large, sundried-bricks of which most walls in Egypt were built were made of mud, held together by straw

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chopped into short lengths. He ordered that no straw be given them. Let them gather stubble from the fields, and turn out as many bricks as before! That would keep the plotting agitators busy.

Naturally the Hebrews cursed Moses for bringing this added trouble on them. Moses was discouraged, but he persisted in demanding permission for his people to go out of Egypt. Then began a series of disasters known as the Plagues of Egypt. The stories of these plagues are very dramatic. In each case Moses and Aaron come into the presence of Pharaoh and demand the release of Israel. Pharaoh refuses. They threaten a plague. When it comes, Pharaoh is often frightened into giving consent, but withdraws it when the danger is over. The story is arranged in a series of climaxes, the plagues becoming more severe, the last being the worst of all.

1. When Pharaoh refused to let the people go Moses threatened that the Nile would run blood. This happened. The sacred Nile on which they depended for all their water and which they worshiped as a God turned red as blood, was offensive to the smell and was polluted with dead fish. For seven days this lasted. The magicians persuaded Pharaoh that this disaster was not the work of the Hebrew God, and Pharaoh refused to let Israel go.

2. Moses threatened a plague of frogs. This happened. Frogs swarmed in the sacred Nile, invaded the houses, hid in the beds, baked with the bread in the ovens, hopped into the dough in the kneading-bowls. Pharaoh was convinced that the

Hebrew God had caused this plague. He asked that Jehovah be entreated for relief. The next day the frogs died; but again Pharaoh refused to let the people go.

3. Moses threatened a plague of lice. This happened. The vermin were so thick that it seemed the very sand had been turned into lice. It was a peculiar torture to the fastidious Egyptians, more cleanly in person than any other ancient people. The magicians gave up. "This is the work of Jehovah," they said; but still Pharaoh refused to surrender.

4. On the next morning Moses and Aaron met Pharaoh and threatened a host of flies; but said that Goshen, where the Hebrews lived, would be exempt. Great swarms of flies filled all the houses and made life miserable till Pharaoh called Moses and said, "Sacrifice here in the land, if you wish." "We can not do that," was the reply, "for we shall sacrifice animals sacred to the Egyptians. They never would allow it;" which was true enough, as Pharaoh knew. "Go, then," he said, "but do not go far." Then when the plague of flies was over he refused to let them go at all.

5. Moses threatened a cattle disease, and a contagious plague spread among the Egyptian cattle, but did not enter the herds of the Hebrews, and still Pharaoh would not submit.

6. Moses and Aaron stood once more before Pharaoh and threw up into the air handfuls of fine ashes, like a symbol of God's curse; and all over Egypt boils and sores broke out on men and beasts. Still Pharaoh refused to yield.

7. Again early in the morning Moses and Aaron stood before Pharaoh. "Jehovah will bring hail on the land," they cried. Then with thunder and lightning came hail so severe that men and cattle were killed and the flax and barley, already partly grown, were destroyed; but Goshen had no storm. While the storm was still on Pharaoh sent for the brothers and cried in a panic, "This is enough. Your God is stronger than I. I submit." But when the storm was over Pharaoh retracted his word and would not let them go.

8. Moses threatened an invasion of locusts that should eat what the hail had left. The frightened court pled with Pharaoh to yield, and he offered to let the men go and sacrifice if they would go alone. Then an east wind brought the locusts. They covered all the land and ate up every plant that the hail had left, till not a green thing remained in Egypt. Again Pharaoh sent for the brothers and, more humble than ever before, pled with them to forgive him and go as they pleased. That night a west wind swept the locusts away. Then Pharaoh once more refused to fulfill his promise.

9. The time of warning was passed. The next plague came without it. God brought darkness over Egypt, so dense that no man could see the face of another, except among the Hebrews in Goshen, where there was light. Again Pharaoh attempted to compromise. He said that all the people might go, but the flocks must remain in Egypt. Moses refused. Pharaoh in anger refused ever to see them

again, and Moses retorted, " You are right. You never will see us again," and went out.

10. The last disaster was the most serious of all. On a certain night the Hebrews held a sacrificial feast and marked the doorpost of the house with the blood of the sacrifice. Then the messenger of death sped through the land of Egypt and smote the eldest in every house not marked, from the palace of Pharaoh who sat on the throne to the hut of the prisoner who lay in the dungeon. At midnight a cry arose from all the land, for in every house there was one dead. Moses and Aaron were hurriedly called to the court and told to take Israel out of Egypt immediately. The people were willing to give them anything they asked—gold, silver, jewelry,—anything if they would only go. So the Hebrews started that very night, driving their flocks before them in the starlight.

This is the dramatic story of the ten plagues, as it is told in Exodus. The question naturally rises, how far do the traditions represent actual events?

Two different kinds of answers can be given: (1) Old traditions are not to be treated as accurate history. Our versions of them date from a period hundreds of years after Israel left Egypt. It would be absurd to demand that they should be correct in all respects. (2) The earliest versions, which best represent the popular stories as told in early Israel, give accounts which might easily have grown out of real events. The Nile, which always takes a reddish color in its rise, became specially discolored and

poisoned with decaying matter. The masses of dead frogs bred flies, always numerous in Egypt, and epidemics of disease naturally followed in their train. Great storms, with hail, while very rare in Egypt, are not unknown, and the description of the destruction caused by the locusts is not at all exaggerated. It is easy to see, in these stories of the plague, the memory of a series of national disasters which the Hebrews believed to be God's punishment upon Egypt. At last, when an epidemic of fatal disease sweeps through the land, the Egyptians themselves, panic-stricken, believe for the moment that it is caused by the God of Israel, and hurry the Hebrews out of the country.

Exodus 3:1-4:17, The call to leadership. Exodus 4:27-6:1, Attempts at release. Exodus 7-11, The story of the plagues. Exodus 12:29-36, The night of release.

## CHAPTER XIV

### AT THE RED SEA

#### THE BIRTH OF A NATION

Panics are never permanent. What a frightened crowd does at night it is usually sorry for the next morning. The Egyptians had hurried the Hebrews out of their homes in the darkness, giving them anything they asked if they would only go and take themselves and their flocks and all their goods, along with their God, out of Egypt.

The next morning, however, when they saw things in the clear light of day, they were sorry that they had let the Hebrews go. Their panic-stricken action of the night seemed foolish. Why had they let these serfs go? They gathered an army and started out to round up this mob of serfs and bring them and their flocks back again. There is a certain humor in the haste with which the Egyptians tried to undo in the morning what they had done the night before. They had yet to learn a very old lesson, that when a thing is once done, it never can be undone.

In the dawning light the Hebrews gathered at the towns near which they lived — Ramses and Pithom, whose other name, Thuku, was in course of time made over into the Hebrew name Succoth,— and started out, a motley crowd, along the road toward

the east. The road soon branched into the two great highways out of Egypt. One turned toward the north and went through the desert near the coast. This was the great coast road along which their ancestors, so tradition said, had come down into Egypt. It has been used from time immemorial and is in use to this day. There were various reasons why they could not take this route. Sandy stretches of desert and wide spaces between watering places made it a difficult road for flocks. Worse still, no sooner would the desert be passed than they would encounter strong and well armed people and they were not prepared to fight for camping grounds.

The other road led more directly east through the Isthmus of Suez, where a branch turned south along the shore of the Gulf of Suez to the turquoise mines in the rugged mountains a little back from the coast. The main road kept on to the east across the high lands to the port of Elath, at the head of the eastern arm of the Red Sea. This road is also still a caravan route, used in modern times as a land route for the Moslem pilgrims going from Egypt to Mecca. Since the Hebrews could not take the direct northern road to Palestine this more southern road was their only way out of Egypt.

Egypt had so many enemies in the east that she had long ago fortified the places where the roads came over the frontier. Ramses II had strengthened the fortifications. Walls had also been built along at least the more easily crossed parts of the Isthmus, like the great Roman wall across Scotland.

The Egyptian government did not intend that any person should come or go over the eastern border without permission.

It was only fifteen or twenty miles from the places where the Hebrews gathered to the frontier. It is a dusty, sandy road, more than half desert. To-day the railway from Cairo to Ismailia follows in part the same general course. It would seem that when they approached the fortress at the border (Etam, Egyptian Hetem, fortress) they were refused passage, and were obliged either to turn back or to follow along the wall toward the south. They did the latter. The way was into the desert, but there was no choice.

There may have been another day or two of wandering to the south. The wall which they were following came to the edge of the water, which even more effectively shut off their route to the east. All they could do was to feed their flocks on the scanty vegetation of the shore and look hopelessly at the sandy ranges of desert to the west and the stretch of shallow but impassable water to the east. Then near the close of the day they suddenly saw, over the distant ridges of sand, armed troops and horses and chariots. They knew well what that meant. It was the end of their fine hopes of freedom. It is no wonder that, under this nervous strain, they turned on Moses with bitterness. "We told you so," they said. "We told you to let us alone. It was better to serve the Egyptians than to die here in the wilderness. Were there no graves in Egypt

that you must lead us out here to be buried?" Moses met the outburst with calmness. He was sure that Jehovah would yet save them.

The sun set and the night came on before the Egyptian armies, toiling through the sand, drew near. They camped for the night, after the fashion of Oriental armies who seldom fought after dark, and expected easily to surround and drive back the Hebrews in the morning.

During the night the most memorable event in all the early traditions of Israel took place. As the early version of the traditions tells the story, a strong east wind blew all that night and drove back the shallow water in front of the Hebrews, so that a way lay open before them straight across to the other side. Here again Moses' quality of leadership came out. He saw in this strangely opened road Jehovah's deliverance and lost no time in starting the people across, tired though they must have been with the day's strain. So speedily did they move that when the morning dawned all the encampment was safely over on the eastern shore.

We can fancy how astounded the Egyptian army were to arise in the morning and find their prey escaped. But their leaders were as daring and undaunted as was Moses, and the army started across after the Hebrews.

The storm had blown itself out, and suddenly the wind changed. Possibly the change of the tide also helped the result. The waters came back. The heavy chariot wheels sank in the mud, the horses stuck fast and soon the entire army was engulfed in

the returning waters. Tradition said that not a man escaped.

It is quite natural that the later versions of the story should make a wonderful event still more wonderful. The priestly version had it that God divided the waters, so that when the Hebrews went through "the waters were a wall unto them, on their right hand and on their left" (Ex 14: 22). Perhaps the later form of the story is influenced by a song in celebration of the event, where, in poetic imagery, the singer said,

"With the blast of thy nostrils the waters were piled up,  
The floods stood upright as an heap,  
The deeps were congealed in the midst of the sea"  
(Ex. 15: 8).

As the early versions tell it, the occurrence lies quite within the range of possibility. A combination of wind and tide sometimes leaves exposed a long reach of land at the northern end of the Red Sea. In April and May such winds often blow with great force, followed by strong winds in the opposite direction. The thing which made the Hebrews always look back on this event as the direct act of God was not that the event itself was miraculous but that it took place just when it did, so as to make a way of escape for the Hebrews.

There has been much discussion as to where the crossing took place. On the Isthmus of Suez there is a series of lakes. The Suez Canal runs at present through all these lakes. The Hebrew name for the waters crossed, the Sea of Sedge, might have applied

to any one of the lakes as well as to the Red Sea. Furthermore, it is quite certain that the arm of the Red Sea itself reached farther north than now. It is fruitless to seek for the exact spot of crossing. Through some stretch of shallow water, at some point of the present Suez Canal, where the great ships with the commerce of the world pass between low banks of yellow sand, the Hebrews passed out of Egypt.

Is it any wonder that when they finally were sure of their safety they went wild with joy? Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, grasped a timbrel and, in the oriental fashion, led the women in the slow movements of ceremonial dance, very possibly using some ancient dance which belonged to their ancestral worship, one improvising words and the others responding with a chorus. It is perhaps this chorus which the story gives:

Sing ye to Jehovah, for he hath triumphed gloriously;  
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

A long poem said to have been sung on this occasion was current in Israel, and the writer of Exodus has also inserted that (Ex. 15: 1-18). Though at least some of it seems to be later, it is a noble poem, but the song improvised on the sandy shore that morning may have been less perfect as a poem. One wonders if the people apologized to Moses for their ungracious words to him on the other side.

A matter of interest is the number of people whom Moses led out. The early Hebrews, caring little

about dates and numbers, remembered it simply as a large migration. Naturally, when numbers were given they were not made too small; six hundred thousand men besides women and children (Ex. 12: 37), they said. Compared with numbers given later, when they were settled in Palestine, or with the probability of their position as serfs in Egypt, that number seems to indicate a patriotic desire to glorify the past. Perhaps an earlier form was six hundred clans, or groups of related families, which would not be impossible. Along with them went those whom the account calls a "mixed multitude"; runaway slaves, poor men who had nothing to lose, captives of war, Syrians and Arabs who took their chances with the fugitive Hebrews. Altogether, the migration was not easy to lead. They were an undisciplined mob; only a leader with genius could mold them into a self-controlled nation. That was the task which Moses took up; and before he got through he doubtless often wished himself back among the docile sheep in Midian.

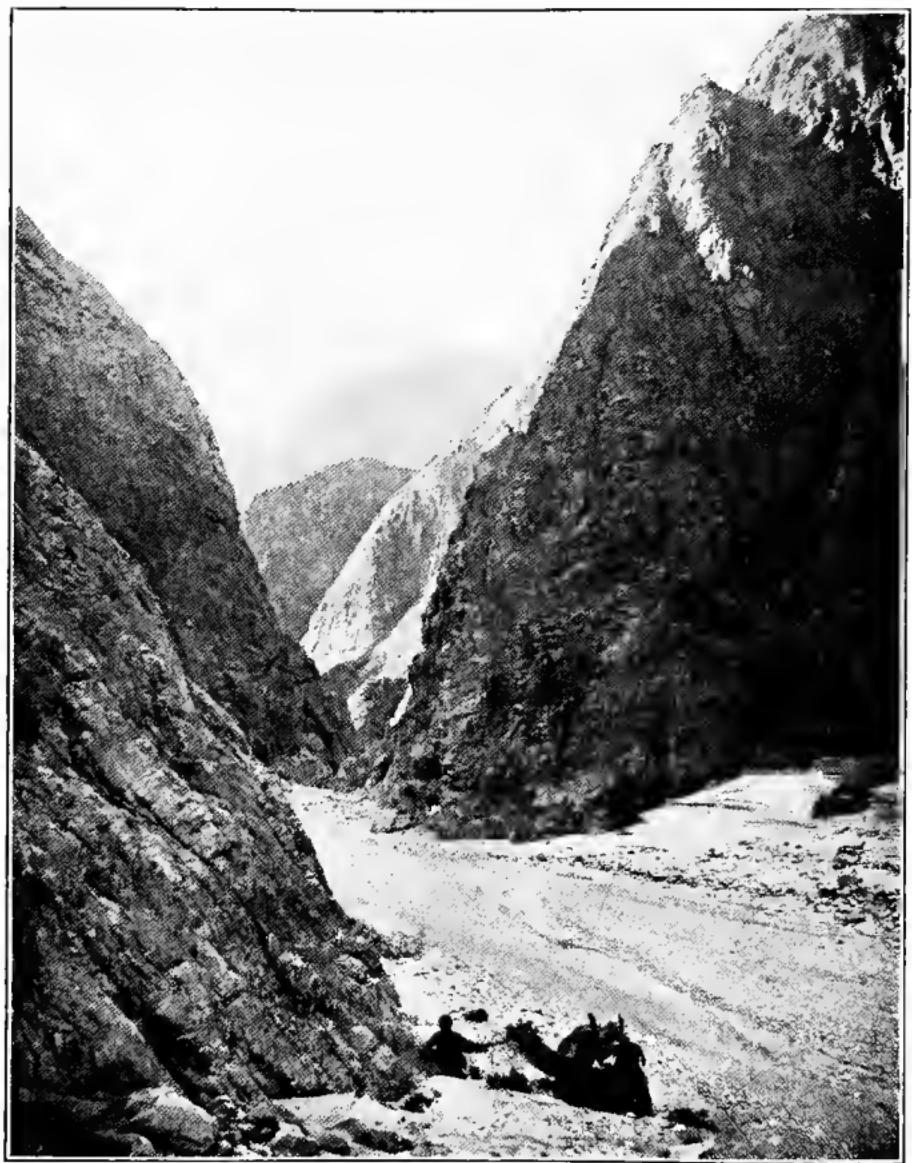
The people could not stay long on the barren shore of the Sea of Sedge. Need of pasture for their flocks, if nothing else, would drive them on. They must scatter widely over the country, going slowly because of the flocks and the little children, but all keeping the same general direction and at night camping for safety as near together as possible. A brasier of coals held aloft on a pole marked the head of the caravan. In the day a column of smoke arose from it and in the night the glowing light could be

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seen afar. This is a device still sometimes used with large caravans. In the tradition of the Hebrews, this pillar of cloud by day and fire by night became the symbol of the guidance of God.

Exodus 13:17-14:31, At the Red Sea. Exodus 15: 1-21, The Song of Deliverance.





The Mountains of the Sinai Peninsula

## CHAPTER XV

### THE FIRST STAGE OF THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY

#### HOW THEY CAME TO THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD

The Hebrews had still a choice of roads after they had passed over the sea. They might go south along the shore of the Gulf of Suez, then turn into the ravines and take refuge among the lofty, rugged mountains. This southern route was long held to be that taken by the Hebrews, and Mount Sinai, to which they soon came, has been placed among the peaks at the southern end of the peninsula. A famous convent of the Greek Church stands on the traditional mountain. This region, however, was Egyptian territory. If the Hebrews were trying to get away from the power of Egypt, it is often said, this is not the place to which they would have gone. In spite of the long tradition, then, many are inclined to look elsewhere for the route of the Hebrews.

Straight across the plateau in the northern part of the peninsula ran a caravan route to the port at the head of the Eastern gulf of the Red Sea. It was the road by which Moses had lately come from Midian. It led directly to the pasture lands he knew best and to the Midianites, among whom he had found a home and friends. So far as is known Egypt never tried to control this road. Many think that this was the road taken by the Hebrews,

and that Sinai (or Horeb, as in one version of the stories) is the "Mount of God" in Midian where Moses saw the vision of the burning bush.

For forty years, their traditions said, the Hebrews lived in the region south of Palestine. Forty is probably, as often in the Bible, to be taken as a round number, meaning a generation. Most of the time was spent at Kadesh, an oasis concerning which more will be said later. Here was their center and from here they drove their flocks to pasture over the region around. This shepherd life lasted till the people whose habits had been formed in Egypt had nearly all died and a new generation, reared in the hard life of the desert, took their places.

Memories of the events of these years were preserved in traditions, and the writers of the biblical books used those which showed most strikingly how Jehovah was educating them, and so preparing them to be a nation. Moses was regarded as his instrument. We have not a full history of the years in the wilderness, but a series of striking anecdotes, each illustrating the care of God. Probably as the stories were told among the people there was no attempt to put them in order of time.

In connection with these stories the compilers wove in all the laws of the people, so that Exodus and Numbers are a mixture of story and law, while Leviticus and Deuteronomy are almost entirely law books. The reason for doing this was because tradition ascribed all the laws of the nation to the time of Moses, as in Persia all the laws were ascribed to Zoroaster, the founder of the Persian religion.

They traveled from the Red Sea for three days through the wilderness. It was their first experience of waterless wastes. Then in the distance they saw bushes and vegetation and hastened on, only to find that the water was brackish and undrinkable. Dwellers in the desert learn to endure such conditions without complaint, but the Hebrews were too accustomed to easy living. Their mouths were parched and their children were crying for thirst. Again they turned on their leader, as they had done by the Red Sea, and demanded water they could drink. Tradition said that God showed Moses a tree which he cut and threw into the water and it became drinkable. The story is the first of a series told to show that God met the needs of the people on their journeys. It also shows the attitude of the people toward Moses. They held him responsible for all the difficulties they might meet; but if they were to become a nation this must be changed. No people without self-reliance and resourcefulness is worthy to be a nation. To instill those qualities into them was the task of Moses.

Later they came to Elim, whose richness, contrasting with the thirsty country they had crossed, made a great impression. It was a large oasis with twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees. Here they rested and refitted for their further journey. Moses had been a shepherd too long to overdrive his caravan.

After they left the oasis of Elim they had to pass through the wilderness of Zin on their way to Sinai. As they went through this desert land their food

began to fail, and they looked back with longing to the good living they had in Egypt. "Would God we had died there," they sighed, "where we sat by the flesh-pots and ate bread to the full." Distance lent enchantment. They forgot the taskmaster's whip and the burden of labor and the bitterness of slavery. Better servitude and food, they now thought, than liberty and hunger. No nation fit for freedom can hold such a position. But, as the story was told in Israel, God had pity on them. When they went out at sunrise the next morning they found on the ground little whitish flakes which melted when the sun became hot, but which they could gather early in the morning and boil for food. They said "Man hu?" "What is it?" and so it got the name manna. One form of the story also told of a flight of quails which added to their food supply. This is perhaps drawn from another tradition given in Num. 11. The great point of the story is that God cared for this impatient, undisciplined people, struggling with unfamiliar conditions and complaining because their leader had freed them from slavery.

The Arabs of the desert sometimes make a coarse bread from the gum of tamarisk bushes, a whitish substance that melts in hot sunshine and has the flavor of honey, as the manna is said to have had. Sometimes, too, they use a lichen from the rocks, which is loosened and blown about the desert in dry weather. Food provided without labor of course seemed to the Hebrews to be sent from God and to be a direct evidence of his care.

Moses was not leading the people aimlessly in

the wilderness. He had said to Pharaoh that he wanted to take the people out of Egypt for a sacrifice to their God, and so he did. Now he proposed that this sacrifice should be at the mountain where he had the vision of Jehovah. Moses had gone away with the feeling of a high mission and now he was bringing the people here to present them to the God who had delivered them.

All the surroundings were impressive to the people. They had lived on the flat lands of the delta and most of them had never seen mountains. When they entered the narrow defiles with the jagged rocks above them, it seemed a new world full of wonder. At last they came to the mountain. A great sacrifice was held. Moses went up the mountain alone to meet God, while the people waited below. He came back and spoke to them the message he felt was given him by God. This laid upon them certain obligations, chief of which was that they must now worship this god Jehovah only. They are his own especial people, redeemed from slavery by him, and he would allow no other god to share their worship.

Naturally the traditions about this event were marvelously vivid and impressive. It is difficult to tell how much is the memory of historic events and how much is poetic symbolism. This symbolism expresses the feeling of awe which the memory inspired, the sense of the presence of a great God before whom nature itself trembled and veiled its face. At least three forms of the tradition were told among the people, but they all were the same in

substance. Parts of all three were woven into the story in Exodus, making an account of wonderful impressiveness.

They encamped before the mountain and Moses spoke to them in the name of God: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings, and how I brought you to myself. Now if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own treasure, my precious jewel." And the people answered, "All that Jehovah commands we will do." Moses carried their pledge to Jehovah; then they purified themselves and waited two days for the revelation. On the morning of the third day they awoke to find thick clouds hanging over the mountain, and blinding lightnings flashing and thunder crashing amid the crags so that the ground shook and all the people trembled. Then Moses went up the crags into the thick darkness while the people waited trembling below, standing afar off and gazing in awe at the lightnings and moving clouds.

When Moses came down, he brought with him the law of the covenant. Again the people promised, "All that Jehovah has said, we will do." Then Moses arranged a great sacrifice where the people bound themselves by the most solemn ceremonies to worship only this God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. Moses took a company of seventy of the leaders of Israel up into the mountain with him. They came back saying that they had seen God, and under his feet was a pavement of sapphire and above, the very sky for clear-

ness. God had shown himself in the bright sunset glow above the clouds.

For six days the mists hung low on the mountain. On the seventh glowing fires again appeared, and once more Moses went up into the clouds while the people waited below. The day passed and he did not come back. More than a month went by. Questions of pasturage for the flocks must have begun to trouble them. The storms on the mountain had passed away and life slipped back into its humdrum round, all the more wearisome because of the tense experience through which they had recently passed. Still they watched in vain for Moses. Could it be that he was dead in the mountains?

At last after forty days, despairing of Moses, they appealed to Aaron. "Give us a god," they said, "We do not know what has become of this Moses." Aaron made an image of a bull for them and said, "Here is the god that brought you out of Egypt." He intended it as an image of Jehovah, for he made a sacrifice and a feast to Jehovah. But the worship of an image had too many corrupting associations to be safe, and their feast degenerated into a noisy debauch. In the midst of their shouting and dancing there appeared the stern face of Moses. Hot with indignation, he broke the stone tablets of covenant which he had carved in the mountain, threw the image into the fire, powdered the gold which covered it and, putting it in water, made the people drink it. This was a magic ordeal to bring sickness to those guilty of idolatry. Aaron, frightened at his brother's hot anger, tried to lie

out of his share of the blame, and, as usually happens, succeeded in making a fool of himself. "You know how bad these people are. They would have it! I only threw their jewels into the fire, and there came out this bull!"

Moses was almost in despair. All his feeling of triumph was gone. His lone vigil on the mountain when, in storm and solitude, he had felt the presence of God only gave the people an opportunity to deny the covenant they had just taken. In spite of the pretense of sacrificing to Jehovah their worship was what Jehovah never could accept.

Moses' depression was all the greater because of his recent religious exaltation. It seemed to Moses that God himself must despair of Israel, and he pled with him for their forgiveness. "Thy people have sinned a great sin. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive them—; and if not, blot me out of the book thou hast written." Moses had reached the point of complete absorption in his work. If that failed life was no longer of any value.

As the story now stands in Exodus, Moses went again into the mountain and once more carved the laws of the covenant on two tablets of stone, replacing those which he had broken in his anger. This marked the renewal of the broken covenant. Jehovah was willing to give the people another chance.

This chapter has shown Moses in a variety of experiences. He had one great triumph, when he brought Israel to God at Horeb as evidence that he had so far fulfilled his commission. He had one

great disappointment, when he almost despaired of the people as fit to worship Jehovah. He was realizing, what leaders always find sooner or later, the fickleness of the crowd. The greatness of Moses is shown in his clinging to his task in spite of it all. The true leader does not always succeed; but he always goes on after a defeat.

Exodus 15:22-16:20, The discontent of an untrained people. Exodus 19:1-25, 20:18-21, 24:1-18, 32:1-34:10, Events at Sinai.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE COVENANT OF JEHOVAH

#### How MOSES MADE A CONSTITUTION FOR HIS PEOPLE

The “law of the covenant” which the people bound themselves to accept at Sinai was believed to have been inscribed on two stone tablets which the people carried with them as memorials of this great event in their history. Tablets of laws were known in Babylonia long before. A stone monument inscribed with the laws of King Hammurabi, who lived over six hundred years before Moses, has been discovered by modern explorers.

What laws did Hebrew tradition assign to these tablets? The Ten Commandments, is the ready answer. And that is right; but what were the ten commandments? The familiar version in both the Jewish and Christian churches is that of Exodus 20. In Deuteronomy 5 the same decalogue is given, but with some differences.

In Exodus 34, however, another decalogue is given as written on the tables of stone. The explanation probably is that there were in Israel two codes of laws, both of which seemed fundamental to the worship of Jehovah. One form of the account of Sinai chose one code as most important and the other form chose the other code. Both contain some of

the same laws. Possibly both are later editions of the same original code. Ancient laws were not rigidly fixed and there was no hesitation about making additions and changes, as we may see by comparing the decalogue in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.

We may call the decalogue in Exodus 34, The Law of Worship. Put in brief form it is:

1. Thou shalt worship no other god.
2. Thou shalt make thee no molten image.
3. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep.
4. Every first-born is mine; thou shalt sacrifice it or redeem it.
5. Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest.
6. Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks, and the feast of ingathering at the end of the year.
7. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifices with unleavened bread.
8. The sacrifice of the passover is not to be left till the morning.
9. The best of the first fruits of the land shalt thou give to God.
10. Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

The commands to worship Jehovah only, not to make idols and to keep the Sabbath are found also in the other decalogue. The commands about feasts and sacrifices are in other parts of the laws, some of them several times. The curious command about boiling a kid (number 10) is also given twice elsewhere (Ex 23:19, Deut. 14:21), so it must refer

to some well-known custom. Probably it was connected with the worship of other gods, but we do not know how. The feast of unleavened bread was used as a memorial of the night on which they left Egypt so hurriedly that they did not have time to leaven the bread. It may have come originally from an old spring festival. The other two feasts are also connected with the seasons and are thanksgiving days at the beginning and end of harvest. The origin of the Sabbath was perhaps connected with the four quarters of the moon. The Sabbath helped the people to remember that they were Jehovah's servants and their time belonged to him. So did their flocks and even their own persons, and the law of the first-born would not let them forget it. The whole group of laws was designed to instill in the people's minds a deep loyalty to Jehovah.

The other decalogue, in Exodus 20, may be called The Law of Conduct. It is, omitting enlargements, as follows:

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make for thyself any graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
10. Thou shalt not covet.

As a permanent religious rule of life, this code is far more valuable than the other. It is the best and most compact statement of right action that any ancient religion ever produced. It does not contradict the other decalogue, but supplements it. Worship and morals go hand in hand.

It is interesting that these laws are found in groups of tens. In the older codes of Hebrew laws other groups of fives and tens are found. The early Babylonian laws often have the same grouping. The reason goes back to the early device for remembering by enumerating on the fingers. When writing became more common the early form was not kept with care, so that many of the groups of fives and tens in the Hebrew laws are imperfect.

How much of the early Hebrew laws go back to the time of Moses it is impossible to say. The Hebrews, like other nations, kept revising their laws and assigned them all, with their revisions, to Moses as the great traditional law giver. In somewhat the same way we still speak of Webster's Dictionary; it is the original Webster with many additions. The Hebrews were correct in speaking of the law as the Law of Moses. He laid down the principles from which it all proceeds, and much of his work probably remained embedded in it till the last. Probably few of the laws were then written out. Most of them were the decisions given in particular cases; what is called case law by modern lawyers. One of the traditions illustrates it.

While the camp was still at the Mountain of God Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came to visit them.

He brought Moses' wife and two children, who had at some earlier time been sent back home for safety.

One day he watched Moses give judgment in cases, as the sheik of a tribe in the desert still does. Now Moses had not one tribe but a group of tribes to manage, and the cases occupied him all day while the people crowded the tent waiting their turn. The shrewd old man saw that this would not do. Moses would break under this strain. Jethro was a man of organizing genius and suggested to Moses that subordinate judges be appointed to take the mass of cases, only the more difficult ones coming to him. This Moses did, keeping for himself what we might call the work of the legislature and of the supreme court. This was the beginning of Hebrew civil organization, which is as necessary for a nation as good leaders. It is interesting that it came, not from Moses, but from the fertile brain of the old Midianite chief.

All the accounts show very cordial relations between Moses and this Midianite family into which he had married. Another place (Num. 10:29-32) tells how Moses urged his father-in-law to stay and share the prosperity of Israel, "We are going to the place Jehovah promised us. Come with us, and we will do thee good." The offer was declined, and Moses skillfully changed his plea. He urged not what his father-in-law could get, but what he could give. "You know this country. You can tell us where we can camp. You can be eyes for us." That is the kind of an appeal which a true man al-

ways finds it hard to resist. The fragment closes without telling Jethro's answer, but later the Kenites were inhabitants of Canaan federated with the Hebrews, and the Kenites were the branch of the Midianites, according to tradition, to which Moses' father-in-law belonged.

The laws have shown some of the characteristics of this remarkable religion of Jehovah. Of course it developed as time went on; religions always do. Its basis was very simple. It was, Jehovah is the only God for Israel to worship. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

In the ancient world there were gods for different things — "department gods," they are often called. There were also, especially in the Semitic lands, local gods, lords (Baals) who ruled over a special territory. None of these gods ought a Hebrew to worship, but only Jehovah. This was not monotheism, the belief that there was only one god. That came later in their religion. It was what is sometimes called monolatry; they believed that while many gods might exist they should worship only one.

From this basis come three principles.

(1) Jehovah has made a covenant with the nation. If they will worship only him he will give the nation prosperity. A covenant is an agreement between two persons each binding himself to do certain things. The ancient world used various devices to express the covenant; eating together, sprinkling the persons with the blood of sacred animals, building a pile of stone, setting up a stone pillar, and

especially making a sacrifice and eating together a sacrificial feast. The stories we have had have illustrated most of these.

(2) This religion is national, not individual. That was the greatest difference between the early Hebrew religion and that of to-day. A person's relation to God was only because he was a member of the nation. Should one be driven out from his nation he could no longer worship this God, for the God had nothing to do with foreigners.

(3) All the laws of the nation are religious. In modern times we draw a sharp distinction between religious obligations and civil laws. In early times men did not. God himself was the ruler, and the leaders of the people were his agents. Moses was a lawgiver because he was a prophet, and later generations said that God spoke to him face to face and gave him the laws which they were to follow in all their later history. This type of state is called theocracy, government by God, as government by the people is called democracy.

Moses' feeling that God was really guiding his decisions was not merely a temporary emotion, the result of religious exaltation among the clouds on the Mountain of God. It was a part of his daily life. A little apart from the other tents was pitched, at each camping place, a "Tent of Meeting." It was probably of rough goat's-hair cloth like the other tents. It contained the ark, a symbol of the presence of Jehovah. This was the place where God met his prophet and here Moses went to decide cases in the presence of God. The tribes of the

desert often had seers to whom they went "to enquire of God." To both the people and Moses this was the natural method of seeking the divine guidance, and Moses felt that he was not meeting his problems in his own strength but in that of God.

If one realizes the deep conviction in Israel that their national God was their national ruler, it clears up some things which make the Bible seem strange to modern readers. It shows why laws were ascribed to God, why civil problems were referred to a religious decision, and why wars and the affairs of political history were regarded as directed by God.

Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 5:6-21, Two versions of the ten commandments. Exodus 34, Another group of laws. Exodus 18, Numbers 10:29-32, Moses and his father-in-law.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE SECOND STAGE OF THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY

#### HOW AN IMMATURE PEOPLE WERE TRAINED

Moses had no intention of settling the people in the mountains about Sinai. The ravines there were no place for the long stay of shepherd clans. So the second stage of their experience as free tribes began. As they went out on the broad, rolling, gravelly uplands of the Wilderness of Paran, it was in search of homes and permanent pasturage. The Hebrews were emigrants.

Our usual picture of the emigrant is the individual, or at most the family, going by sea or land to a new country where work is waiting to be done or open spaces of land to be occupied. The emigration is individual. But as a matter of fact most of the migrations of the world which have influenced history have been what is called folk migrations, where whole tribes have set out with flocks and herds, women and children, to seek new homes. All early migrations were of this sort. It was in this way that our own forefathers moved across Europe. The migrations of the Pilgrim Fathers to Plymouth and of the Quakers to Philadelphia were essentially of the same class, but most of the later migrations to America have been individual.

So the movement of Israel was a folk migration of a loosely organized group of tribes in search of a new home. It had two advantages over many such migrations; first, it had a leader of great genius and determination and, second, it was like that of the Pilgrims and Quakers, under a religious inspiration, a feeling that God guided their actions. It had one great disadvantage; the people were a poor stock. Their fathers who came into Egypt would have been good material for such migration, but the long life in the warm lands by the Nile had unfitted them mentally and physically for desert hardships. All the rest of Moses' life was one long struggle to make a nation out of this undisciplined mob. Sometimes he even despaired of accomplishing it.

Tradition said that from the first the Hebrews planned to go to Palestine, the land from which their forefathers had come. Stories of their life there had been told from generation to generation in the homes of Egypt, as stories of the old country so often are, and they believed that their God would lead them back. Doubtless they expected soon to enter this promised land and turned toward Palestine from Sinai and moved on as rapidly as possible.

How could they be sure that Jehovah would go with them? They had visited his shrine. They had seen clouds and lightnings and heard peals of thunder over his sacred mountain. Evidently he was there. It may be, as some think, that Jehovah was originally a god of storms who lived on this mountain; at any rate, he was thought to be on this mountain more really than he was elsewhere.

But now they were leaving the mountain, and they wanted to take Jehovah with them. How could they do it?

The solution of Moses was the Ark of the Covenant. This was a box made from such wood as was available in the wilderness and ornamented as the simple shepherds were able. At some time two winged figures, cherubim, were placed on the top, making what symbolized to the poets of Israel the throne of Jehovah, but possibly at first the box had no such elaborate adornment. Perhaps the idea of this ark came from a sacred box or chest used in connection with worship in Egypt. This box was the ark of the covenant because, so the story says, the tablets with the law of the covenant were placed in it. It was the symbol of Jehovah's presence with Israel. Wherever it went, Jehovah went, and wherever it rested, there Jehovah stayed. It was kept in the Tent of Meeting, where God gave his decisions to the people through Moses.

The moving of the ark was a religious ceremony. When they started with it, they sang a prayer:

Rise up, O Jehovah,  
And make thine enemies to flee,  
And let them fly that hate thee.

When they set it down they sang:

Return, O Jehovah,  
And bless the myriads  
Of Israel's clans.

It was the symbol of the highest things in their

nation, like the flag in modern times, or like the standard of the emperor which every Roman soldier was proud to defend. All the national and religious sentiment of the people gathered about it.

The life of the Hebrews in the wilderness was probably much like that of the Arab tribes in the same region to-day. They lived in rough tents of goat's hair, each clan forming a little encampment and the whole body keeping as near together as the need for pasturage permitted. The thin vegetation was soon exhausted at one place and they moved elsewhere. Their food was, in the main, curds from the milk of their flocks with now and then a little addition from the hunt. It was a rough, hard life, but good discipline for them.

In this period of their journey are placed a few traditions which show the people in various moods and which throw light on the problems of Moses. One story shows complaint once more about the food supply. They were tired of its monotony and wanted meat. "We remember the abundance of fish we could get for almost nothing in Egypt," they said; then they trailed off into the memory of all the good things they used to eat. "You remember," they said to each other, "the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic. And now our very life is starved out of us. We are sick of this manna." Their memory was correct. Even slaves in Egypt could have all the fish and vegetables they wanted. But they were in no danger of starvation. They were living quite as well as any of the tribes of the desert, only they

wanted variety, and that is what the desert tribes had to learn to do without.

They blamed Moses, as though he had done them an injury in liberating them. He went to the Tent of Meeting and appealed to God. "They demand that I give them flesh to eat. What can I do? The burden of this people is too heavy. I can not bear it." Moses was thoroughly discouraged.

That very night a wind sprang up, and with it came quails from the south. All that day and the night following and the next day the people gathered quails. For once the people had all the meat they wanted, and so greedily did they gorge themselves that sickness fell on the camp and many died. In this way tradition accounted for the name of a place in the wilderness called The Graves of the Greedy, Kibroth-hattaavah.

The story is fully in accord with the migration of quails. They winter in Africa, and in the spring fly across the desert to Palestine in large numbers.

Another tradition is of the selection of seventy men to help Moses bear his burdens. Even with the help of the judges whom his father-in-law had suggested he needed further aid. He gathered them at the Tent of Meeting, and then, in the primitive phrase of the early story, God came down in the cloud and took some of the spirit of prophecy from Moses and put it on them; as though the spirit of God were a coat which could be put off and on. Then occurred one of those little turns which show the real character of men. A young man came running out to the Tent and reported that upon two

men in the camp had also fallen the prophetic gift. Joshua appealed to Moses to forbid them. "Are you jealous for me?" said he. "Would God that all Jehovah's people were prophets." It was the answer of an unselfish, generous-souled man, who cared more about the good of the people than about his own dignity.

Again there came a time when they had to encamp without water. The Amalekites, a wild tribe of the desert, had camped about the spring at Rephidim and were ready to fight for its possession. The Hebrews had not yet learned the first lesson of desert life, to endure thirst patiently and husband all strength for the journey to the next spring. They made such a mutiny that Moses was afraid of being stoned. "What shall I do to this people?" he cried to God. Then God told him, so tradition said, to smite a rock, and water came from it. A curious legend arose that this rock, with its spring of water, followed them in all their journey. Paul alludes to this quaint belief in 1 Cor. 10: 4.

The Hebrews could not live long nor travel far in the desert without being challenged by the tribes who held the springs and pastures. Poor country as it was, every oasis and spring was claimed by some tribe. The Amalekites proposed to try out the power of this new people in battle. There was nothing for Israel to do but fight. The leadership was given to the young man who had charge of the Tent of Meeting, Joshua, of whom we shall later hear much. Victory, however, was ascribed by tradition to Jehovah. The men could lift up their

eyes from the battle-field and see the figure of their sheik Moses standing on a hill-top, his hands raised in prayer to Jehovah. After their victory Moses built an altar and called it "Jehovah is my banner."

This battle was the beginning of vigorous national self-assertion. No nation deserves liberty unless it is willing to fight for it.

The writer of Numbers puts in this period a tale of a sordid family quarrel. Miriam and Aaron — principally Miriam, the story implies — became jealous of their greater brother. Perhaps the explanation was that as Moses' wife Zipporah had recently come to him, as told in the last chapter, Miriam was no longer the most important woman of the camp. The result was an attack on the leadership of Moses. "Has not God spoken by us also?" she said. Moses, being the meekest man in all the world, did not attempt to defend his dignity, but God gave an oracle.

Hearken now to my words:  
 If there be a prophet among you,  
 In visions do I make myself known to him,  
 In dreams do I speak with him,  
 Not so with my servant Moses;  
 In all my house he showed himself trustworthy.  
 Mouth to mouth do I speak with him,  
 Plainly and not in riddles,  
 And the form of Jehovah doth he behold.  
 Why then did ye not fear  
 To speak against my servant Moses.<sup>1</sup>

Leprosy came upon Miriam as a punishment until

<sup>1</sup> Translation of Gray, *International Critical Commentary*, Numbers, New York, 1903, p. 124.

Moses, with characteristic kindness, prayed for her forgiveness.

This group of tales shows the people undisciplined, unreasonable, childish, but beginning to learn the lessons which life teaches; and Moses, lonely, discouraged, almost ready at times to give up, but generous and forgiving and, in spite of his difficulties, keeping to his work.

Exodus 33: 7-11, The Tent of Meeting. Numbers 10: 33-36, Deuteronomy 10: 1-5, I Samuel 4: 1-11, The Ark and its uses. Numbers 11, More discontent about food. Numbers 12, A Revolt against Moses.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### IN THE CAMP AT KADEXH

### THE INVASION THAT FAILED

The successful fight with the Amalekites gave the Hebrews a standing in the country. They were able to take possession of one of the largest and best watered oases in the region, called Kadesh. It lies in a narrow valley extending east and west. On the north is a ridge of high hills, beyond which lies the rolling plateau. On the south lower hills border the desert. Several large springs of water break out. Fig trees grow here and a little care would make the valley a garden of fertility. It is the largest oasis in all that thirsty land below the hills of Palestine and the fact that the Hebrews could hold it is a tribute to their military strength. At best, however, the life of the wilderness was a life of hardship. It involved long journeys for pasture, poor fare and perpetual watchfulness against the jealous tribes of wild Arabs about them. They had no idea of making a permanent home in the wilderness.

Hebron was about 70 miles, Beersheba about 50 miles north of Kadesh. Between lay only an open rolling country, becoming more fertile as one proceeded northward. To the people of the half desert region of Paran it would seem a land of luxurious

pastures. Flocks could there feed anywhere, springs were more numerous than in Paran, and in the northern part the gravel gave way to fruitful soil and fields of grain were frequent in the valleys. The Hebrew shepherds, searching out a little pasture here and a little there on the gravelly uplands, began to plot an invasion of that richer limestone region. Moses favored the plan, and they set about the business in orderly fashion. Moses sent a group of men to spy out the land. Probably they were to appearance simply a group of traders, driving asses laden with wool; such traders as all the tribes of the desert frequently send out to the towns. One still sees such groups of desert Arabs trading in the bazaars of Hebron and Jerusalem.

Material from the three collections of stories is woven together in the account in Numbers. The late priestly version regards the spies as twelve in number, representing the tribes, names Joshua among them, and considers that they went through all the land to the very northern boundary of later Israel. The earlier form of the story narrates a much more modest trip, fitting far better into the probabilities of a journey of shepherd traders. It makes their journey end with Hebron, the largest town and the natural market of the southern borderland of Canaan. Hebron lay on a hill overlooking a narrow valley and controlling the main road to the north. The region about was very fertile. More than a score of springs broke out in the hills near by and all the land was green with gardens and vineyards and olive orchards.

The Hebrews wandered about the fruitful fields and bargained with the merchants in the bazaars where they sold their wool and bought cloth and grain to take back, and gathered all the information they could meantime. This was surely a land to be desired; the great question was, could they take it. The farther they had come the more doubtful they had grown. When they stood at the gates of Hebron and looked up at its massive walls; when they thought of the other towns they had passed or heard of along the way, the land seemed, after the empty spaces of the wilderness, to be teeming with population and protected by strongholds. The men too were great, stalwart creatures, a veritable race of giants. The poor traders from the desert were depressed. An invasion seemed hopeless. It was at the beginning of the grape harvest and they bought some of the fruits of the fertile fields to show at home — among others, tradition said, a bunch of grapes from the valley of Eschol (the Cluster) so large that two men carried it on a pole between them — and some pomegranates and some figs, and went back to the camp at Kadesh.

Their report was not unanimous. “The land is good,” they all said. “The fruit we brought back shows that. But the cities are walled, and very large. We saw the gigantic sons of Anak there.” One of the spies, Caleb, said, “Nevertheless, let us go up at once. We are well able to take the land.” The others said, “There is no use in trying it. The cities have walls as high as heaven, and all the people are very tall. We saw giants there before

whom we were no bigger than grasshoppers." Their statements were evidently colored by their imagination.

The people had been dreaming of going into a land of an easier life, and this discouraging report was too much for their still unstable discipline. They turned on Moses. "We had better have died in Egypt," they said, and they began to plot a mutiny. They would appoint another leader and go back to Egypt. If Moses had hoped that the people were now ready to win new homes and better conditions by daring a warfare with the peoples of South Canaan, he was disappointed. They were not even willing to made a trial at the loosely held lands on the borders. They might as well go back to the lands of his kinsmen the Midianites toward the eastern gulf of the Red Sea. He resolved that they should lose no time, but start the next day.

Then the people turned again. All night they sat in their tents bewailing the situation, and in the morning announced that they were ready to go up to fight for the land Jehovah had promised them. But it was too late. Moses could not be deceived by this tardy assumption of bravery. The decisions had been the results of contagious panics and the people could not hold to them over night. Who could know what might happen in the test of a battle? Moses refused to lead them in an invasion or to allow the ark to go with them. They still foolishly insisted on going. In this hurried action the flocks and families were left in Kadesh.

It was fortunate that they did not abandon Ka-

desh, for the rabble which called itself an army never got very far. The Amalekites who claimed the region through which they started called in the aid of the Amorites about Hebron, and the Hebrews were defeated and chased back to their encampment.

This ended all hope of gaining a foothold in Palestine for the present. In course of time some of the tribes with whom the Hebrews were affiliated, like the Kenites, and perhaps some of the Hebrew clans themselves, slowly penetrated into the Southland and remained there. The majority of the clans, however, made no further attempt to reach Canaan from the south.

When the defeated Hebrews straggled back weary and wounded, it was no time to strike camp and seek other homes. The only thing that could be done was to remain for the present at Kadesh, where they were so strong that the Amalekites dared not attack them. So they stayed on there. In time they became contented with the place. They were accorded the right to the oasis and the pasture lands about, as is the custom among the shepherd tribes, and seem to have held it without further attack.

They remained at Kadesh for upwards of a generation. The people were gaining in numbers and in power. The boys and girls grew up to the shepherd life with its strict duties, its simple fare, its stern hardships, its constant watchfulness. They became a generation of pioneers. They did not sigh for cucumbers and garlic, like their fathers. They were content with curds and a handful of dates. Such

people are excellent material for the foundation of a nation. Meantime Moses was the great sheik of all the clans. He was both their civil and religious leader. He trained them in obedience to the Law of the Covenant till the most real thing in their life was their God. To him is due the fact that Israel had the germs of a better and more efficient religion than any other of the nations of the old world.

The life at Kadesh was mostly without incident, filled with the monotonous round of shepherd life. It is not surprising that the Hebrews preserved few stories of their Kadesh life; there were few to be preserved. One tradition, however, may be placed in the earlier years at Kadesh. It shows the characteristics of the earlier generation which so often broke out in mutiny against Moses.

In the tribe of Reuben two men, Dathan and Abiram, set up a revolt. When Moses summoned them they sent a scornful refusal. "Is it not enough that you brought us out of a land of good living, but you must now set yourself up as a prince over all the tribes?" They were still harping on the fish and vegetables of Egypt. "Where is your promised land, flowing with milk and honey? Where are the fields and vineyards you were going to give us. We will not come to you." This was the most daring attempt yet made at a revolt. It only won a few followers and tradition said that the earth itself opened and swallowed them up. At any rate the rebellion disastrously failed, as it deserved to fail. As demagogues often do, its leaders tried to play

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on popular discontent and used catchwords about the good old times, but most of the people had learned wisdom and supported the leadership of Moses.

Numbers 13, 14, The account of the spies. Deuteronomy 1:19-46, Another account of the spies. Numbers 16, A second revolt against Moses.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE THIRD STAGE OF THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY

#### HOW THEY LEFT KADEXH AND BEGAN THE CONQUEST OF A NEW HOME

Moses led one more attempt to win a home in Canaan for his people. The pasture lands centering about Kadesh were becoming too small for the growing flocks. They must find room for growth. They could not expand into the territory on either side because their neighbors were hostile.

When the Hebrews, looking back from a later time, told the stories of their ancestors, they did not dwell on these motives so much as on another. God, they believed, had promised them the land of Canaan. It was a religious movement. Moses was so conscious of the presence of God that all plans for the progress of the people were to him God's plans; so when the time seemed ripe for a migration from Kadesh the facts of the situation were to him a command of God.

Even yet they did not dare to enter Canaan from the south. The only other plan was to go far around to the east and find out what could be done beyond the Jordan north of the Dead Sea. Possibly their plans only went as far as a home in the great grassy regions which stretch east of the Jordan Valley. The most direct way to this land would

have been northeast across the deep, hot valley just south of the Dead Sea, then up the steep heights to a broad plateau held by the Moabites. There were two objections to this road. One was that the first part was through a desert so barren and waterless that caravans with flocks of sheep and women and children would find it almost impossible to cross. The other objection was that the plain of Moab was held by a strong people with fortified towns who might not welcome a great, straggling crowd from the desert.

There was another way straight east through the range called Mount Seir. This was occupied by the Edomites, a tribe belonging to the same stock as the Hebrews, and the Hebrews could not hope to go through the rocky, winding ravines without their permission. That permission the Edomites refused to give, and the Hebrews had to give up hope of this route. Whether because of this ungracious act or for some other reason, the Hebrews had a long feud with the Edomites.

The only other route was a long one. They must go to the south till they came near Elath at the head of the eastern gulf of the Red Sea, then turn north up the caravan route on the east of the Mountains of Seir. This took them entirely around Edom. It was more than twice as long, but it was the only road open to them.

So they struck their tents, set the ark once more in the front of the caravan, and moved slowly away from Kadesh over the slope of the southern hills into the wilderness; and by the next day the Amale-

kites had swarmed like flies down over the mountains from the north and up the valley from the west, rejoicing that once more these splendid springs were theirs.

The latest tradition placed the death of Aaron on this journey. Unable to endure, at his age, the hardships of the journey, he died and was buried, as the Arabs still sometimes bury their chiefs, on a neighboring mountain top named Hor, a peak of the Mount Seir range.

Even these shepherds, reared to lead the sheep in the lonely wastes, found unexpected hardships. Moses and his God are held to blame for them. "Why did you ever bring us out?" they complained. "There is no bread and no water, and we loathe the vile food we have to eat." When they came soon after into a region infested with poisonous snakes they regarded the reptiles as Jehovah's punishment and repented their rash words. Long afterwards there was the brazen image of a serpent kept in the temple at Jerusalem, and this was the story told about it: When the people were attacked by serpents in the wilderness Moses made this image and put it on a pole in the camp, that whoever was bitten might look on it and live. Perhaps the prophets of Jehovah did not believe this tradition, or perhaps they thought that even an ancient relic ought not to be kept if it was worshiped; at any rate, they had it destroyed in the time of Hezekiah, who made a reform under their influence (II Kings 18: 1-4).

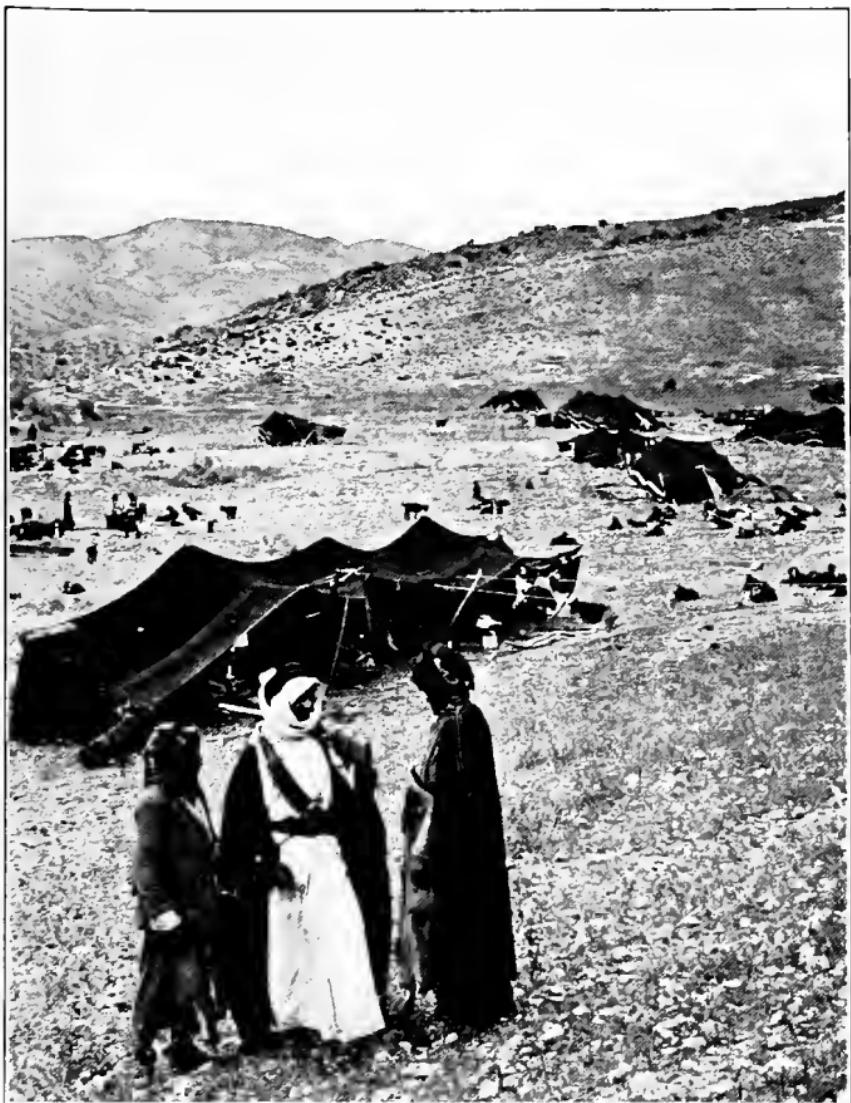
At last the long loop to the south was completed.

The Hebrews were east of their old home in Kadesh, but on the other side of the mountain range. They had taken a long and hard journey but they had kept the peace with Edom. Now they proposed to keep the peace with another kindred race, the Moabites, who held the high plateau just east of the Dead Sea, and they bore to the east of Moab where the fertile land shades off into the desert.

They were on a wide plateau, in its highest portions over two thousand feet above the sea. A gorge cuts down through it where Arnon flows into the deep valley of the Dead Sea. It is like the larger side canons which cut into a great canon of the west, such as the Grand Canon of the Colorado. When the Hebrews reached this region, their wilderness wandering was over. They were where, at least a part of the year, streams gurgled and tumbled down the sides of the ravines and all the land was green with fresh springing grass. On the plains between the valleys they came to a place called Beer, "The Well," and here, in the joy of the watered land, tradition said that a song arose, a "chanty," long sung while they drew water from wells at the close of the day.

"Spring up, O Well! Sing ye to it!  
To the well which the princes dug,  
Which the nobles of the people delved,  
With the leader's wand, with their staves."

Perhaps the last line refers to some ceremony when the sheiks opened the well in the name of the tribes.



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A Shepherd Camp on the Hills East of the Jordan



Soon they were over the Valley of Arnon, on the southern edge of a fertile country, very different from the wastes they had held about Kadesh. As a matter of fact they were now within the borders of their permanent home.

Now it happened that this region north of Arnon had recently been over-run and conquered. The Moabites had formerly held it as far as the Jabbok, the next valley to the north, but some of the Amorites, one of the races which had crowded into the hills west of the Jordan, had pushed east and driven the Moabites back south of the Arnon. Numbers preserves an old war-song, mentioning this conquest, and taunting the victors with their speedy defeat by Israel. If the Amorites were attacked they certainly could not expect help from their neighbors of Moab; and the Hebrews knew it and acted accordingly. They asked Sihon the Amorite king for permission to pass through his territory. He refused, as had the Edomites. He gathered his clans to meet them, but this agricultural people were no match for the stout limbed, toughened hordes from the desert. The Hebrews were victorious, captured the chief city and swarmed over the land.

The Moabites watched the movements of this invasion with hostile eyes. They were glad enough to see the Amorites driven out but not at all pleased that this vigorous people, under an experienced old leader like Moses, took the land which a little while before had belonged to them. They may have been still weakened by the Amorite conquest; for some reason they did not care to cross the valleys of the

Arnon and attack the Hebrews. They knew a better way than that.

In some foreign land — one form of the story makes it the country by the Euphrates, across the Syrian desert — lived a famous magician named Balaam. He was thought to be so powerful that his curse or his blessing would make or mar a whole people. Balak, the king of Moab, sent to this seer and said, "Come and curse Israel for me." Now Balaam was an honest seer who followed visions which he believed to come from God; and he said to the messengers, "Stay with me to-night, and I will tell you what God says." The next morning he gave his answer. "No. God will not let me go with you," and the messengers went home.

Soon other messengers arrived, important chiefs from the Moabite clans, and urged him to come and curse Israel. Balak thought that he had not offered a large enough fee and he suggested that Balaam might name his own price. "Not for a houseful of silver and gold would I go against the word of God," said the seer, "but — stay to-night and we will see," and the next morning he said God had given him permission to go.

The chiefs set off early in the morning and the seer followed at leisure, riding on his ass, as did men of substance and dignity in the ancient East. And here comes in a bit of folk-lore of the sort that is common all over the world. As Balaam rode on in a narrow path between vineyard walls his ass shied and finally lay down under him. When he

beat her, she began to talk to him and Balaam replied with as little surprise as if his ass were accustomed to discuss matters with him. Then God opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw what the ass had seen, an angel in the way, who warned him that he must speak only what God permitted regarding Israel.

Balaam is taken to a shrine on the border of Moab from whence he can see part of the extended camp of Israel. The seer goes to a rocky height to receive his message. He comes back and recites an oracle, but lo! it is a blessing instead of a curse.

“ How can I curse whom God has not cursed?  
How can I defy whom God has not defied?  
Who can count the dust of Jacob?  
Who can number the myriads of Israel? ”

Balak, disappointed, takes him to another height, and again Balaam goes alone to receive his message; this time even more definitely a blessing on Israel. Once again in another place the oracle is a blessing instead of a curse; and each time Balaam protests to the king that he can only say what God puts in his mouth. At last Balak dismisses the seer with anger, and he responds with still another oracle, predicting a future conquest of Moab by Israel.

“ There shall come forth a star out of Jacob,  
And a scepter shall rise out of Israel,  
And shall smite through the temples of Moab,  
And break down the pride of the haughty.”

Such was the story of Balaam as told in the tra-

ditions of Israel. It is a splendid story of the care of God who makes even a foreign seer fulfil his will for Israel.

Numbers 20:14–21:32, The journey around Edom.  
Numbers 22, 24, The story of Balaam. Psalms 105, 106,  
136:10–22, The great events of this period as later poets saw them.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE LAST DAYS OF MOSES

#### HOW THE HEBREWS FOUND HOMES EAST OF THE JORDAN

The traditional life of the great leader of early Israel divided into four parts. In the first he was a youth in the court of Pharaoh, with the memories of his humbler early Hebrew home. In the second, he was a shepherd in the desert of north Arabia. In the third he was the leader of Israel in the long years of wilderness life, gradually training a race of men who should be strong enough to gain for themselves a home in a better land than the barren desert. The fourth part was much briefer than either of the others. It was the period of the conquest of the territory east of the Jordan. It began with the defeat of Sihon king of the Amorites, and lasted till the death of the aged leader. It was the crown of Moses' life.

The story of the conquest of the Amorites and why they could get no help from their Moabite neighbors was told in the last chapter. The region of which the Amorites had gained control, as said there, was the country lying between the deep valleys of the Arnon on the south and the Jabbok on the north. The western part of this land was well watered and fertile, the eastern, gradually changing

into the desert. The southern portion was a part of the plain of Moab. That plain has always been a grain producing section. It is still at some portions of the year a common sight to see long trains of mules crossing the Jordan laden with wheat from these plains.

This has always been a land of sheep. While grain was raised, the great wealth of the land lay in its flocks. The whole plain is about fifty miles long by twenty or thirty broad, but the most fertile part was only ten or twelve miles across. The southern part of the plain of Moab was never held by the Hebrews, but always by the Moabites, while the northern part, then conquered by Israel from the Amorites, went back again later under the power of Moab. It shifted between the two nations as each was the stronger, somewhat as Alsace and Lorraine have shifted between France and Germany.

The kingdom of King Sihon reached farther north than the plain country, into a region of low hills and fertile slopes, to the next deep valley, the Jabbok, on whose banks tradition said Jacob had wrestled with Jehovah. Sihon met the invaders at Jazer, probably somewhere on the southern border. In a whirlwind dash, such as the tribes from the desert have frequently made upon the more disciplined armies of the settlers, the Hebrews won the day and swept over the plain to the north, summoning the towns to surrender. There was probably no massacre of the people. All the Hebrews wanted, for the present at least, was undisturbed pasturage and water and freedom from danger of attack.

The earliest tradition says that they took Sihon's capital, Heshbon, and the towns round about and dwelt in them. This probably does not mean that all the Hebrews abandoned their black tents to live in stone houses, though many may have done so. Most of them became semi-nomads, feeding their flocks within a certain section of the country and camping at the places where the pasturage was best at different seasons of the year. It was an easy step to leave the tent and live in a village, though to this day some of the tribes in this region cling to the tent life. It was also an easy step to the occupation of farming, and the agricultural life of Israel began here east of the Jordan.

When the Hebrews told their tales of these ancient times they coupled with the defeat of Sihon, king of the Amorites, the conquest of Og, king of Bashan, but the account of that campaign is very meager. North of the Jabbok lies a hilly country, in those days and long afterwards heavily wooded, a land of green trees and running brooks, very different from the open, treeless plains of Moab. The traveler passed through great forests of oak and in the valleys were vineyards and orchards of pomegranate and olives, while the plains into which the valleys spread out here and there contained fields of grain. This hilly country and the land of lower hills south of the Jabbok and north of the plains of Moab was called Gilead. In later times it was always held by Israel, no matter who held the plains on the south.

North and east of Gilead lay again a plain, sloping

away to the desert on the east and to the distant regions of Damascus on the north. This was called Bashan, perhaps meaning "The Fertile." Its black volcanic soil was very rich, growing grain abundantly when the hordes of desert tribes allowed it peace, but its great reputation was for its breed of big cattle. "Bulls of Bashan," the Hebrews said when they wanted to symbolize strength and power.

Tradition said that at this time a king named Og ruled Bashan, and a fragment of a story is copied in Numbers 21:33-35 telling how the Hebrews defeated his army and took his land. He was said to have been the last of an ancient race of giants, the Rephaim, and at a city of Gilead there was what was called Og's bed, about twelve feet long by six wide — fit for a giant indeed! It is very likely a sarcophagus cut from the black basaltic rock of the region, such as exist to the present day in that land and are sometimes used as watering troughs at the springs.

From these scraps of tradition we can reconstruct the last efforts of Moses to gain a home for his people. Having obtained the kingdom of Sihon, they were dangerous neighbors for the people who held the land to the north, and were soon attacked. Again the Hebrews were victors, took the capital of Og and spread through the hills of Gilead and over the plain of Bashan. All the land east of the Jordan was now theirs from half way down the Dead Sea to the Sea of Galilee and from the Jordan to the edge of the desert. However long this may have taken, the Hebrews, in their stories of the old time, assigned it all to the days before the death of Moses.

One more war is recorded. No nation has held this country long without being obliged to defend it from tribes which swept in from the desert, as did the Hebrews themselves, and the last war of the story of Moses was with Arab raiders, Midianites. Israel drove them back in defeat, and the Hebrew possession of the country was for the present secure.

So at last Israel had a permanent home in a fertile land. Some of the tribes were quite satisfied with this excellent land and never moved across the river. There was doubtless room enough for them all at first, and for some time they lived there, becoming stronger and more able to take their place among the settled nations of Syria.

To the end of his life Moses was their leader in war and in peace. Since he had been a lawgiver for a generation it is altogether likely that the earliest laws of the new conditions came from him. Tradition tried to explain why he was not permitted to go one step farther and lead the people across the Jordan. The only answer they could find was that he must have offended God. (Num. 20: 10-13.) They naturally thought that he must have longed to cross the Jordan, but perhaps he did not. He may have been content with the success which crowned his life in winning the east country.

The earliest stories had little to say about the close of his life, but later traditions picture it vividly. They tell how Moses called Joshua to the Tent of Meeting and, in a solemn ceremony, appointed him his successor. He bade him be strong and of a good

courage and lead the people over Jordan. Then the aged leader took his lonely way up to Pisgah, a projection on the western edge of the plateau they had won from the Amorites. It is a headland running out from the plain and looking down over the valley of the Jordan, just at the head of the Dead Sea. Across the deep gorge of the Jordan lie the hills of central Palestine and on clear days Mount Hermon, the great mountain at the north of Palestine, can be seen. One of the high points of this ridge still bears the name of Neba, from the Mount Nebo where Moses viewed the land he was not allowed to enter. He never came back to the camp. He had gone up to meet God, as long ago he had met Him on the mountain in the wilderness; and there, alone with his God, he died on the mountain, and no man knows where he is buried to this day. It is a sublime and fitting end for the splendid story of a great prophet.

Moses made a deeper impression on the memory of Israel than any other man. He found the Hebrews an undisciplined mob and made them a nation. He was a lawgiver who laid down principles that developed into one of the best systems of law in the ancient world. He was a prophet who taught religious ideals which made the Hebrews' conception of God and of morals the basis of the highest modern civilization. At the same time he was a man of very human impulses, with moods of depression and of hopefulness, with bitter disappointments and brilliant successes. He succeeded because, in spite of mistakes and failures, he clung to his ideals until

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others also were won to accept them and were persuaded to live by them.

Deuteronomy 3:1-22, Numbers 21:33-35, Conquests east of the Jordan. Deuteronomy 3:23-29, 34:1-12, The close of Moses' life.

## CHAPTER XXI

### JOSHUA THE WARRIOR

#### HOW A RESOURCEFUL LEADER BEGAN A GREAT CAMPAIGN

When the wonderful tales of the conquest of Palestine west of the Jordan were told in northern Israel they centered about a warrior, Joshua, as the tales of the journey from Egypt had centered about Moses. The tales as told in Judah had very little about him. Joshua was the leader of Ephraim, a large tribe which settled on the central hills north of Judah and south of the plain of Esdraelon. The conquest of all the country came in time to be assigned to him by the Ephraimites.

It may be that Joshua's conquest was neither so rapid nor so universal as the tales about him imply. It is natural for popular estimate to enlarge the work of a hero and forget that anything was done in his time which he did not do. If we lived in a period when the knowledge of the past rested on oral traditions it is very possible that all the victories of the American Revolution might soon be assigned to Washington and all those of the Civil War to General Grant.

One is not surprised, then, to find fragments of the story of the conquest as told in Judah narrating a slower and less sweeping victory and telling of cam-

paigns which Joshua did not lead. Judah absorbed some of the tribes in the south of the country, and so it contained people whose ancestors never came across the Jordan under Joshua.

How long the Hebrews were satisfied to stay east of the Jordan we cannot tell. The traditions imply, though they do not say, that the people crossed the Jordan soon after the death of Moses, but later memory may have shortened the time. It was long enough, at any rate, for part of the people to become so thoroughly fixed in their life that they did not care to leave the good land in the hills of Gilead and the plains of Bashan. Reuben, Gad and part of Manasseh kept their abode on the east of the Jordan, where the pastures were abundant for the many flocks they possessed. Tradition said that Moses himself had given them this land. (Num. 32.)

Three motives led the Hebrews to leave the eastern land and cross the Jordan. (1) The belief that west Palestine was their land of promise. The stories emphasize this motive. "God said, 'Arise, go over the Jordan unto the land which I give to the children of Israel.'" (2) The need of more land. The country east of the Jordan was not large. It already had a population of shepherds and farmers settled from ancient times and the incoming Hebrews overcrowded the country. The search for more land, had there been no other reason, would soon have driven them across the Jordan. (3) The weakness of the people of Palestine. The population of the hill country was largely composed of two

kindred races, the Amorites and Canaanites. Later generations remembered a list of other names — Hivites and Perizzites and Jebusites — which were only divisions of the inhabitants who lived in certain sections. Had the people combined they could easily have defended themselves from any shepherd invaders from the desert, but what had happened on the east of the Jordan also happened on the west. Each section of the country held itself aloof from the others. Had Egypt been still in control of the land, as it had been in previous centuries, the Hebrews could not have gained a footing there; but Egypt had withdrawn her armies and the peoples of Palestine had developed no firm government to take its place.

As the traditions were told in northern Israel, Joshua had been trained and tested long before the death of Moses. He had, while still a young man, led the Hebrews in the fight with the Amalekites at Rephadim. He had been given charge of the sacred Tent of Meeting. A late tradition said that he was one of the spies who went from Kadesh to Hebron, and that he joined Caleb in urging the people to enter Palestine from the South without delay. He was already a man of age and experience, with a long, hard training behind him, before he became the captain of Israel's armies.

Once more, as from Kadesh, spies were sent into Palestine. Two men, perhaps going with some caravan of merchants, crossed the river and entered Jericho. They came back after three days saying that they had had a narrow escape, but that the

people were in panic at the prospect of a Hebrew invasion, and that they had found treachery in the city itself. "God has given the land into our hands," they said. "The people's courage melts before us."

We can fancy with what eagerness the summons ran through the camps of the Hebrews. Down they came from the plains of the east and out of the valleys of Gilead, driving their flocks with them. For three days they camped near the Jordan. It was in the spring, when the river was flooded from the melting snows on the mountains to the north and from the winter rains. There it lay before them, a broad stretch of muddy water. The road leading to the ford passed through a tangle of bushes, and the water swirled in and out of the thick undergrowth at the sides. The ford is easy in low water, when loaded donkeys can be driven over, but at the time of flood it is another matter. Then, as the oldest tradition told the story, a surprising thing happened. The water began to lower till at last the river ran dry. The story had it that the people had actually prepared to cross, the ark going before, and that when the feet of the men bearing the ark touched the brink the waters began to recede. The people hastened to cross, and the ark was kept in the middle of the bed of the river until all had gone over. Then those who bore it came up and the river ran full again.

This version of the story gives an explanation of what had happened. Far up the river, at a place called Adam (Red Earth), whose site is not known,

the river had been held back while the waters below, running down, left the bed of the stream dry. The explanation suggests what is said by Arabic historians to have happened in 1257 A.D., during the wars of the crusades. Over the Jordan was at that time a bridge by which a retreating Moslem army wished to cross, for the river was in flood. The bridge needed repair and while the army waited the river, to their surprise, ran dry. Men were hurriedly set to work at the repairs and a horseman was sent up the stream to find the cause of this strange event. He brought back word that the high water had undermined a steep bank which had fallen and dammed up the river. It may be that something of the sort furnished aid to the Hebrews.

Whatever the explanation, the event made Joshua and the people sure that Jehovah was on their side. If Joshua took advantage of the unexpected lowering of the flooded river he showed here the same readiness to take advantage of a new situation which Moses showed at the Red Sea. In later times there was a pile of stones on the plain of the Jordan at Gilgal which were said to have been brought from the bottom of the empty river and laid up here for a memorial.

The camp of the people spread out over the plain which reached up the Jordan Valley from the Dead Sea. The southern part of the plain was salt and sandy but about Jericho it was fertile and full of fruits and crops of grain. Jericho was called The City of Palmtrees, from the orchards of date palms about it. The tropic heat of the deep valley made



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The Plain of the Jordan, Looking Southeast from the Ruins of  
Ancient Jericho. The Upper End of the Dead Sea Can Be Seen  
at the Extreme Right.



it a garden spot, but the same tropic climate weakened and enervated its inhabitants, so that they had no mind to fight with the more vigorous peoples from the hills. "Jericho never stood a siege, and her inhabitants were always running away," says a modern scholar.<sup>1</sup>

But to Joshua and his warriors the city presented a great problem. Its high brick walls loomed up before them, above the surrounding orchards, and blocked their road to the hills beyond. The great city gates were shut, and so there was no chance to try the test of battle. Shepherd tribes have never been successful in long sieges, and Joshua was puzzled to know how to conquer a city whose people would not do him the favor of fighting.

One day Joshua, alone in the solitary fields, pondering his problem, had a vision. A man met him with a drawn sword in his hand. "Are you for us or our enemies?" asked Joshua. "I am the captain of Jehovah's host," was the answer. "Put your shoes from off your feet, for this is holy ground." Joshua came back with a clever stratagem in his mind which he believed God himself had given him. It was certainly original. He never could have gained it from the stories of desert warfare told about the Hebrew campfires.

As the earliest traditions had the story, the people marched in solemn silence about the city the first day, then filed away to their camp as silently as they came. The men of Jericho were puzzled. Was

<sup>1</sup> George Adam Smith. *Historical Geography of Palestine*, p. 268, New York, 1894.

this some new piece of magic? They did not know what to make of it.

The next day the same thing happened. If this was magic, it had no result as yet, and some may have begun to feel relieved. The next day again there was this same silent march. It might be uncanny, or it might be simply absurd, but at any rate it was puzzling. The fourth day and the fifth day and the sixth day the useless round was made in silence. By that time it was an old story. If the Hebrews were trying some unknown magic it did not work. The people were tired of watching the dumb show and probably made their jokes about the silly maneuvers of those crazy Hebrews. When the monotonous performance began on the seventh day we can well suppose that no one paid any attention to it, which was exactly what Joshua had hoped. He marched as usual, disposed his forces at the points of vantage as he pleased, while no one looked over the brick walls to see what he was doing. Then they shouted the fearsome battle shout, every man rushed forward, the gates gave way and the city was taken before the people had time to recover from their surprise.

We may be sure that such a marvelous story lost nothing in the telling. The later traditions make it more elaborate. Each day seven priests blew seven trumpets of ram's horn as the procession moved about the city; on the seventh day they marched about the city seven times, then, at the shout of the warriors, the walls fell flat before them and the inhabitants were left defenseless.

Joshua ordered that the city should be "devoted" to Jehovah by total destruction. Every living thing was killed, and all the city, with its wealth and luxuries, burned or taken as an offering to Jehovah. Joshua pronounced a curse upon any one rebuilding it. So the ruined city was left desolate and gradually the sand drifted over its walls and covered the shapeless piles of brick within, until all that the traveller can see is a great mound with here and there the corner of a brick wall cropping out. Many centuries later there was another Jericho in the Jordan Valley, but that was built on another site near by.

Joshua 1, The new leader. Joshua 2, Spies in Jericho. Joshua 3, 4, Crossing the Jordan. Joshua 5:13-6:27, The capture of Jericho.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE WAR OF CONQUEST

#### THE TALE OF A GREAT CAMPAIGN

Three roads ran into the hills from the Jordan Valley. One went by a steep, winding ascent to Jerusalem. This was shut up to the Hebrews. Jerusalem was one of the old walled cities of the land, well able to guard the narrow passes which led to it. The other road lay to the south and climbed up to the hills between Jerusalem and Hebron. The third road lay to the north and came out on the hill-top at Bethel.

By this road Joshua purposed to make his first invasion of the hills. Summer was coming on and he had no intention of staying long in the steaming heat of the Jordan Valley.

Far up where the road broke from the ravine onto the open hilltops, stood a town, Ai. The Hebrews knew this town blocked their next move and sent spies to see how it could be taken. The road leads from the Jordan plain into a precipitous ravine, then breaks over a ridge into another ravine and winds up to the open height only a little way from Bethel where tradition said Abraham had encamped. The town of Ai guarded this height. It was a walled town, but much smaller than Jericho. The Hebrew





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The Road from Jericho to Ai Near the Top of the Hill Below Bethel

scouts, in the flush of their easy victory over the great city of the plain, despised the little hill town. To their minds the long, hot climb from the valley was more to be dreaded than the prowess of the few warriors holding the little fortress on the hills. They came back to the camp and reported. "Do not send all the men up," they said. "Two or three thousand will be enough. The inhabitants of Ai are few. Why should all our army toil up the steeps for nothing?" So to be on the safe side Joshua sent three thousand, the largest number the scouts had mentioned. Careless and secure in their strength, they attacked the town but they had a great surprise. Doubtless the warriors of Ai knew of the approach long before the Hebrews had appeared on the hill-top and they swarmed out like angry wasps in defense of their homes. The casualties of the battle seem ludicrously small — tradition said that thirty-six dead were left on the field — the rest saved their lives by running away.

The reason for the defeat is plain enough. It came from too much confidence and too little preparation. Those who told the story in Israel, however, saw another problem. Why did the God of the nation allow his people to be defeated? Their answer was, because God's command had been disobeyed.

In the destruction of Jericho a Hebrew had found a rich Babylonian cloak, a sum of silver and a bar of gold. The value of the silver was about \$140, of the gold about \$500, but the purchasing value was much more. The wealth had tempted his greed and he had taken it and hid it in his tent. All the booty

of the city had been "devoted" to Jehovah; that is, it was all to be destroyed as a sacrifice to God who had given them the victory and so this man had not merely been a thief, but, far worse, in the ancient world, a sacrilegious person. His crime was so great that it had stained the entire people. It was one which in antiquity was judged worthy of death. Achan and all his family were stoned to death in a valley near by, and his goods, his flocks and tents and the stolen property were burned. Over the ashes a pile of stones was raised as a lasting memorial of the crime and its punishment.

Now they turned again to the military campaign. Ai must be captured. This time, however, they had no intention of underestimating their enemy. A larger army climbed the steep path. A stratagem common to nomadic people when besieging towns was arranged. At night a force was hidden on one side of the town. In the morning a force showed themselves on the other side, advancing as though to give battle. The warriors went out again from Ai, and again the Hebrews turned and fled with their enemies pursuing and the city gates left open and undefended. Then the Hebrews in ambush came out and won an easy victory. The town was "devoted," like Jericho, and after its complete destruction the army marched back to the Hebrew camp at Gilgal.

The people in the hill country of Palestine were divided into independent city-states. There were anxious hours among them when it was learned that the Hebrews had opened the way from the Jordan Valley to the hilltops. If they had combined they

could easily have defended the steep roads from the valley, but combination is a very hard thing for some people to learn. The country had formerly been part of the Egyptian empire. Perhaps the Egyptians still claimed it, but if so they did not defend it.

The Canaanites relied wholly on themselves; and not without success. The Hebrews never conquered some of the towns. The old inhabitants lived for centuries among the invaders till at last the people all melted into one. One of the groups of Canaanites were the Gibeonites, who lived in the city of Gibeon and in neighboring villages, five or six miles northwest of Jerusalem and six or seven southwest of Ai. The Hebrews had an ancient treaty with these people, which even in the days of King David was still regarded as binding.

This is the story which was told of the origin of the treaty: After the capture of Ai the fear of the Hebrews was great among the people of the land, for they knew that their country now lay open to attack. The Gibeonites planned a cunning scheme to save themselves. They fitted out an expedition to look as though it had come a long journey. The saddlecloths of their asses were worn, their leathern waterbottles old and torn, their sandals patched, their clothes ragged, their bread dry and mouldy. When they came into the Hebrew camp at Gilgal the crowds gathered and stared at the seemingly weary and way-worn travelers. "Where do you come from?" asked Joshua, "and who are you?" "We are from a very far country," they said, but they did not give its name. "Our people have heard of your great

power and have sent us as ambassadors. This bread we took fresh from the oven when we started; see how dry it is now. These ragged sandals and clothes were new when we started. It has been a long, long journey. Now make a treaty with us." The Hebrews were puffed up with pride. They made the treaty; then the embassy left for their return journey, doubtless taking a good stock of fresh bread to last on the long and weary march.

Soon the Hebrews learned that these ambassadors lived just over the tops of the western mountains, but though they protested against the deceit by which the treaty was gained, they still honored it.

The memory of a great battle was linked with this story of the Gibeonite treaty. The report spread among the hills that Gibeon had formed an alliance with the Hebrew invaders. That seemed treason to the interests of the other hill towns and they planned to punish the traitors. The head of the plot was the king of Jerusalem. He combined with the kings of Hebron, twenty miles to the south; Jarmuth, sixteen miles west, Lachish and Eglon, twenty miles west of Hebron on the border of the plain. They gathered the forces of these towns and of the villages about and moved to besiege Gibeon. The Gibeonites sent to the Hebrews for help and the Hebrews responded. The besiegers were surprised and fled, followed by the Hebrews. They went up a sharp, rocky ascent to a village, Upper Beth-horon, then to Beth-horon, deep in the valley. This is a famous road. Caravans and armies have marched up and down it from the wanderers of the earliest

days of history to the Allies in the recent war. The Hebrews, weary but victorious, cared little for the history of their road. The day seemed scarcely long enough for their purpose. An old song, current later in Israel, told how Joshua delayed the very sun from setting that they might have time to defeat their foes. Joshua said,

“Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon,  
Thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon,  
So the sun stood still  
And the moon was stayed  
Till the people defeated their foes.”

It is a poetic way of saying that nature itself fought with Israel, as another ancient poem says of another occasion that “the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.”

After southern Palestine had been subdued another combination was made by the kings of northern Palestine, in the country known in the New Testament as Galilee. Here a great battle was said to have been fought at the Waters of Merom, sometimes identified with the Lake of Huleh, north of the Sea of Galilee. The first chapter of Judges contains a section of an old account which shows that long after the times of Joshua the towns of both central and northern Palestine were still held by the Canaanites, even though the Hebrews had pasture and camping rights on the hills.

Joshua 7, 8: 1-29, Failure and success at Ai. Joshua 9, The Gibeonite league. Joshua 10, Conquest in southern Palestine. Joshua 11, Conquest in northern Palestine. Judges 1, Towns still unconquered.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE LAST DAYS OF JOSHUA

#### HOW THE GREAT WARRIOR BECAME A GREAT PREACHER

Much of the Book of Joshua after the twelfth chapter is occupied with an account of the division of Palestine between the tribes. It is valuable as a record of tribal boundaries long after the days of Joshua, but its assumption that Joshua himself made the division belongs rather to tradition than to history. The earliest stories of the conquest make no such claim. The fragments preserved in the first chapter of Judges are from these early stories and tell how each tribe fought its own battles and won its own territory.

But in later ages all this was forgotten. All the land had belonged to Israel for many generations, and even the old stories of the way some of the tribes had won their towns for themselves did not hinder other story-tellers from assigning all the conquest and the distribution of all the country to the great hero of Ephraim, Joshua. Now Joshua was certainly a very great character and worthy of all the praise that was given him. If later people ascribed to him more than properly belonged to him, it was only what people are always doing with their great heroes.



TERRITORIAL DIVISION OF CANAAN AFTER THE  
FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THE HEBREW TRIBES

The tribes as finally settled may be divided into four groups:

I. The southern tribes. (1) Judah, a large tribe, holding the southern hills from the Dead Sea to the Philistine plain and from the southern half-desert to the city of Jerusalem. In the early days the tribe was not so important as later. (2) Benjamin, a small tribe whose territory reached from Jerusalem to just north of Bethel. (3) Dan, on the slopes of the hills west of Benjamin and Ephraim, extending from near Beth-horon to the sea at Joppa. The Philistines later crowded them out of their territory and part of them migrated to the extreme north of Israel, where they captured a town and called it Dan. (4) Simeon, whose land lay in the southern part of Judah. The tribe was always weak and in Joshua 19: 1-9 is reckoned as a part of Judah.

II. The central tribes. (5) Ephraim, lying on the hills north of Benjamin. It did not hold a large territory but its central position and the energy of its people made the tribe one of the most important in Israel. (6) Manasseh lay next to the north. It had the largest territory of any in this group, reaching from the Jordan to the Mediterranean, but part of its land was still held in the early times by the Canaanites. It contained Mounts Ebal and Gerazim and the town of Shechem near by, famous places in early Israel. (7) Issachar lay to the north, holding the hills near the Jordan Valley and a part of the Plain of Esdraelon. This tribe was also restricted by the Canaanites, who remained strong in the plain.

III. The northern tribes occupied the hills north of the plain of Esraelon. (8) Zebulun occupied the western part of the country immediately north of Esraelon, extending along the coast from Mount Carmel almost to Accho. In its territory lay Nazareth, which is never mentioned in the Old Testament. (9) Asher lay north of Zebulun, and reached to the borders of Phoenicia. An outlying member of the Hebrew group, it was never very important in the national history. (10) Naphtali occupied a long strip north of Issachar along the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee. Farther north it expanded to include more than half the territory west of the upper Jordan.

IV. The tribes east of the Jordan. (11) Rueben held the northern part of the plain of Moab, from the Arnon to a line a little north of the Dead Sea. (12) Gad occupied the broken hill country east of almost the entire course of the Jordan from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. (6a) The tribes east of the Jordan were reckoned as "Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh," for north of the territory of Gad lay a wide country of pasture lands over which roamed shepherd clans of Manasseh who had preferred the great plains to the hills of Palestine.

This lists twelve tribes, and yet leaves out the important tribe of Levi. This tribe had no territory, perhaps because too weak in the days of conquest to win a foot-hold by war. Later they became the priestly tribe. When they are reckoned in, the tribes are made twelve by uniting Ephraim and Manasseh under the name of their father, Joseph.

As often happens with the memory of a warrior, the tales about Joshua deal almost entirely with his conquest. There was a tradition that Joshua gathered the people to the narrow valley between two sharp peaks, Ebal and Gerazim, and there read to them the covenant of Moses. On one mountain stood a man who read the blessings, on the other, one who read the curses, and to each the concourse of people below responded "Amen." Tradition assigned the arrangement of this dramatic scene to Moses and Joshua only carried out the plan.

For the most part, no traditions break the silence of the years of Joshua's life after the first vigorous battle for the possession of the land.

In the east a man who had been a leader in battle never lost his influence. The Hebrews, like the tribes of the desert from which they came, had no king. There was no ruler. When war arose the man who could lead was given command. When the war was over and the people scattered, taking their flocks where pasturage was found, they saw no need for rulers. Every man ruled his own tent, and what more was needed? If quarrels arose the old men of the neighborhood settled them. Joshua was the greatest man in Israel, but his position was rather one of influence than of authority. His home was in the northern part of the land of Ephraim, just off the road which led from the north to the south, about nine miles from Shechem. We can picture the last years of Joshua as a life of quiet, like a long summer evening following a stormy day.

Two striking addresses were ascribed to Joshua in

his old age. When Joshua was old, so the tales went, he sent out word through the country for all the leaders, the influential old men, the heads of the tribes and the families to come to him. They came, and the aged warrior spoke to them of the past and the future.

"I am old," he said, "but you need me no longer. You have seen how Jehovah fought for you. Not all the old inhabitants of the land are conquered, but God will still fight for you if you will cling to him and to him only. There will be temptations to turn aside to the ways of the peoples about you and to serve their gods. Do not yield. If you stand firm to the worship of your God one man shall chase a thousand. If you abandon him, then you will be lost among these people about you. You know that not one thing has failed of all that God promised you. If you abandon Him, not one evil thing will fail of all His threats. You will quickly perish out of the good land which God has given you." The central idea of the speech is that national prosperity depends on faithfulness to religious ideals.

Once again the word went out through all Israel that Joshua had called the people together. The meeting place was Shechem, that ancient sacred place where the Hebrews had buried the bones of Joseph in the plot which legend said had been bought by Jacob. Here, near the grave of their ancestor, under the shadow of the twin mountains, Ebal and Gerezim, in the most impressive spot in all central Israel, the tale placed the last recorded events of Joshua's life. He reviewed before the people the

history of the past. It is significant that he speaks in the name of Jehovah. The aged warrior had become a prophet, and God speaks through him. "Your fathers dwelt beyond the Euphrates and served other Gods. I called Abraham and brought him to the land of Palestine. I was with his descendants. I went with them to Egypt and brought them back again out of slavery into this land. I fought your enemies. I gave you the land in which you dwell, cities you built not, vineyards and olive orchards you planted not. Now therefore"—Joshua speaks in his own person here—"serve Jehovah the giver of all your goods, not the gods your ancient fathers served. If you will not serve Jehovah, then choose this day whom you will serve; whether those gods of your fathers or these gods of the peoples of Palestine; but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." The people said, "We too will serve Jehovah, since he has done so much for us and our nation. He is our God." "You cannot serve Jehovah," broke out the old man. "He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. If you promise to serve him and then turn to other gods, he will do you evil and consume you, in spite of all the good he has done you before." "Nay, but we will serve Jehovah," persisted the people. "You have chosen him," said Joshua. "You are witnesses to it." "We are witnesses," they said. "Then see," he said, "that you put away all other gods and serve Jehovah only." "Jehovah our God we will serve," they reiterated. So Joshua made a covenant with them and bound them under a vow to worship

only Jehovah. There was a sacred tree in Shechem which tradition said was there when Jacob was in the land, and by it he had pledged his family to the worship of Jehovah. Under its shade Joshua set up a stone to be a perpetual memorial of the nation's devotion to Jehovah.

Then follows the statement that at the age of a hundred and ten years Joshua died and was buried at his homestead in Timnath-Serah, and the story of Joshua is ended.

He was a vigorous character, fearless in battle, clever in strategy, wise in council, whole-hearted in his service to God, utterly unselfish in his devotion to his people. He sincerely tried to carry out the ideals of Moses. He stands as the link between two periods. His work closed the wanderings of Israel and introduced the period of the Judges.

Deuteronomy 27: 1-19, Joshua 8: 30-35, The nation pledged to Jehovah. Joshua 23, 24, The nation again pledged to Jehovah. The close of Joshua's life.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE MIGRATION OF DAN

#### A TALE OUT OF THE DAYS OF THE CONQUEST

When Joshua died Israel had already lost whatever unity it had formerly possessed. Judah and the southern tribes safely pastured their flocks on the hills, but north of them, stretching right across the country, lay a line of Canaanite fortresses which they could not conquer. The strongest of these was Jerusalem, but other towns west of that city still held out. Just north lay the Gibeonite guild, in treaty with Israel. These together so shut off Judah from the Hebrews of the north that in early times Judah was hardly reckoned as a part of Israel. The results were very lasting. To the end of their history Northern and Southern Israel, even when under one government, were as distinct as Scotland and England and sometimes as antagonistic as Ireland and England. Farther north lay the great body of Israel, but they were broken by the plain of Esdraelon, held by the Canaanites, to whom also many fortified towns still belonged. The Hebrews had control of a few towns and rights of residence in a few others, but in the main they were only shepherds in the open country. This situation could not be lasting. Some day it must be changed.

In such a condition one of three things may happen. (1) The two races may combine to make one nation. Thus the Saxons and Normans combined to make the English race. (2) The old inhabitants may push out the newcomers and win back all their land. (3) The newcomers may conquer the old inhabitants and either blot them out or keep them in the position of a lower race. What happened in Israel was a combination of (1) and (3). When later people told stories about the distant past they naturally emphasized the memories of conquest, but there are many evidences that the Hebrew race had a great mixture of Canaanitish blood.

All this, however, took a long time. For the first century or two the future of the Hebrews was very doubtful. They were so scattered and the other peoples so strong that they might easily have been crushed. There was still another danger. The Canaanites were more civilized than the Hebrews. They built towns; the Hebrews lived in tents. They had horses and chariots of war; the Hebrews fought with bows and arrows. They had merchants and caravans, and their store houses contained robes from Babylon and goods from Egypt. The Hebrews were rude shepherds from the desert. There was danger that they with their crude civilization would be absorbed by the more cultured Canaanites. That would have been a great loss to the world; for the Hebrews had one possession better than any held by the Canaanites; that was their idea of God. These rude shepherds carried the seed out of which a higher religion grew.

During this time the different tribes were gaining a foot-hold in the land as they were able. Sometimes they had to shift and change. Winning homes in the new land was a slow process, in spite of a few great victories under Joshua and other leaders. One story has come down which gives a very good idea of the struggles of some of the weaker tribes of Israel to find a place in Canaan.

Far off on the hills in the north of Israel, under the lofty Hermon, one of the sources of the Jordan rises in a great spring under a cliff. The high, rocky ravine with its unusually large spring has been a sacred place from very early times. Here the tribe of Dan had their capital and sanctuary. It was the northern limit of the Hebrews. "From Dan to Beersheba," they said when they included all Israel. The story of its origin is preserved in an appendix to the Book of Judges, and it shows how curious and crude were the moral ideas of the time.

Once upon a time there was a man in the hills of Ephraim named Micah. He stole some money from his mother, but when he heard the curses she laid upon the thief he was frightened and returned it. His mother took part of the money and made an image of wood, covered with silver. They set it up in a little family shrine, and consecrated one of Micah's sons to be the priest. Jehovah was worshiped at the shrine, for in these early days there was no serious objection in the minds of the Hebrews to images of Jehovah. A wandering Levite came along, a young man who had some training as a priest, seeking work. Micah engaged him

to be the priest in place of his son. Now he expected Jehovah's blessing for he had an idol and a shrine and a trained priest, all for his own family.

This was before the days of the kings, and there was no government over the tribes. Each had to fend for itself and fight its own battles. The tribe of Dan had a small territory down on the foothills west of Benjamin. The large tribe of Ephraim pressed on them from the north. In the hills to the south and east were towns still held by the Canaanites. On the plains to the west certain new settlers called Philistines had perhaps already begun to push out the other peoples. Though the Danites were only a small tribe, they felt that they had not yet won their real inheritance in Israel.

They had hopes that off to the north, beyond the lands claimed by the Hebrews, there might still be places open to conquest by a good sword and a strong right arm. Five men set out to see what they could find. They toiled up over the mountains of Ephraim and before they had got far on their way passed the home of Micah with its family temple. They asked the young priest if he would inquire of God for them. He consulted the oracle and told them that God was with them and their journey would be prosperous. Then the Danite delegation went on, indebted perhaps for lodging and certainly for use of his priest and oracle to Micah. And very pious they felt, for had they not laid their plans before God and gained his approval?

They pushed across the plain of Esdraelon and up among the hills of the northern tribes. All the land

was occupied by forces too strong for them to cope with. Then they came to the northern boundary of Israel, where there were few towns and the great heights of the Lebanon Mountains made travel difficult. Here they found a town called Laish. The inhabitants were Zidonians, but Zidon lay far off over the Lebanon Mountains, by the side of the sea, and this distant colony had almost lost touch with their home land; nor were they under the protection of any other clan. They thought the bare mountains about were protection enough. Who would want their little rocky valley, perched up under the steep sides of Hermon? So they lived, careless and secure. They were at peace with their nearest neighbors and never dreamed that tribes from a distance might covet their poor little heritage.

The Danite scouts had seen what they wanted and went back. "What news?" their tribesmen asked. "We have found the place," the scouts answered. "It is large enough for us, and the land produces everything on earth, and the people are unsuspicious. Let us go without delay."

So a part of the tribe of Dan took their flocks and their families and started for the north. Six hundred men — a large army for their little tribe — set out on this raid. On the second day they passed the house of Micah where the scouts had been entertained so hospitably. "Do you know," said these conscienceless scamps, "in these houses are images and oracles; now what do you want to do?" The hint was sufficient. The warriors engaged the young priest in conversation while the scouts stole the

images. "What are you doing?" said the priest as they came out with the booty. "Keep still and come along with us," they replied. "It is better to be a priest of a tribe than of a family." The priest had no more conscience than the rest and gladly went off with the thieves. Doubtless that night he stood before the stolen image and asked God to be good to his new employers.

Before long Micah and his neighbors came dashing up from the rear. The warriors faced about and said, "What is the matter? Why all this company?" "You have stolen my gods and my priest, and now you say 'What is the matter?'" retorted Micah. "You had better keep quiet," said the men of Dan. "Somebody might become angry and kill you." Micah and his neighbors, seeing they were outnumbered, went back home; and the Danites, with a god and a priest, went on to new adventures.

At last they came within striking distance of Laish, lying in its retired valley quiet and secure. They attacked the place, burnt the town, murdered the people, and took possession of the gardens and pasture lands. They built a new town, which they called Dan, and there they set up a shrine with the stolen image; and, the story had it, the run-away priest was a grandson of Moses himself.

There was a time much later, under the kings of northern Israel, when this shrine and that at Bethel were made the two great shrines of northern Israel, to rival Jerusalem in southern Israel. If this story of its origin was a sample of the teaching given there

no very lofty ideas of God or of morals could have come from it.

What a picture the story gives of society and religion in early Israel! What ideas of honesty and gratitude! What conceptions of worship and priesthood! They thought that "might makes right," and that what was won by the sword was the gift of God. They were a barbaric people with a barbaric religion, but they had the germs of higher things. It was the childhood of religion. For a nation at present to sink back to their belief that "might makes right" marks a degradation, for the world has now passed beyond childhood in religion and morality.

Judges 17, Micah and his shrine. Judges 18, The migration of Dan.

## CHAPTER XXV

### EHUD AND DEBORAH

#### THE HEROES OF A HALF-FORMED NATION

The period after Joshua was a time of chaos and confusion. It lasted till the people saw the need of a stable government and formed a kingdom. How long that was no one can say. It was more than a century and less than three centuries.

The local leaders who rose during this period, now in one part of the country and now in another, are known as Judges. They gained their leadership in war, and when peace came through their efforts they naturally were headmen in their localities — sheiks, would be the Arabic term. They were primarily warriors rather than judges. They were not leaders of all Israel, for the tribes were as yet too scattered to work in harmony, but sometimes in a great national danger they were able to bring together several tribes.

The tales of these warriors are in the Book of Judges. The first chapter of that book is a preface, explaining how early Israel was weak because so many of the towns were still held by Canaanites. Chapter 2:6 to 3:6 is an introduction, telling why the editor of the book put it together and what he wished to teach. To him, the history of the Judges

showed that prosperity comes to a nation only by serving God. Whenever Israel left Jehovah trouble came; when they turned back to him he gave them a leader and delivered them from their enemies. The stories of the Judges the writer drew from the old popular tales. He did not change the old stories but he introduced each with a little preface; "Again Israel turned away from Jehovah and again he gave them into the hands of their enemies." Later, two old stories about these times were added at the end of the book, chapters 17 and 18, 19 to 21. The first is the story of Dan, which we have already taken up.

The Judges arose when the nation was attacked. The first attack the book mentions is from the Edomites in the extreme south. Othniel, a leader in the clan of the Calebites, is said to have delivered Israel. The whole story is very vague. Evidently the author knew no details.

The next account is a story which must have been told among the tribe of Benjamin. The Hebrews were not the only people who wanted to come into Canaan. The Moabites from across the Dead Sea had also pushed down, taken the fords of the Jordan, gained control of the plain north of the Dead Sea, and made their center on the rich plains about the ruins of Jericho. From there they sent raiding parties up the roads into the hills and demanded tribute of the scattered Hebrew villages. The poor shepherds would rather pay heavy tribute than have their sheep driven off by the fierce desert men. So they bought their peace, and every year sent their

"present" down to King Eglon in the Jordan Valley.

One year a man named Ehud, a Benjaminite, brought down the "present." He put the tribute in the hands of the king, then with his party started back for the hills. When they came close to Gilgal, the old Hebrew camping ground, he turned back alone and returned to the court. "Tell the king I have a secret message for him," was the word he sent in. "I will receive him alone," said the king, and he entered. Now the guards would never have allowed this had they supposed he was armed. A man with a sword wore it on his left side, where he could reach it quickly with his right hand, and Ehud had no sword there. But the fact was that Ehud was lefthanded, and, concealed under his robe on his right side where no one suspected it, was a sword made for this very occasion. "My message is from God," he said to the king as he entered. The king arose and quick as a flash the unexpected left handed blow came and the king fell dead. Their conference was in the little chamber on the roof where the summer heat was tempered by a breeze. Ehud came out, locked the door, and was away before any one knew what had happened. So the Moabite danger was ended by one brave man who dared to do a courageous deed on the chance of saving his people.

There was grave danger of a far worse subjection than that to the Moabites. Among the tribes in the north there was an old ballad, perhaps the oldest of all the Hebrew poems which have come down to us, which told of the danger and the heroic way in

which it was met. The author of Judges thought so well of the old ballad that he has given it to us, and also given a prose story of the event.

The danger arose from the Canaanites. They were by no means conquered yet, as we have seen. Even in the hill country they held most of the towns, and in the plain of Esdraelon, right across from Bethshan near the Jordan to Dor on the seashore, they held the whole country and allowed no Hebrew flocks to pasture on the rich valley lands.

For a long time no Hebrew dared raise a hand against the Canaanites. It looked as though the Hebrews might sink to a group of clans of wandering shepherds, paying tribute to the townsmen and becoming in time serfs again as they had been in Egypt.

To be sure, there were Hebrew chiefs. There was one Barak, in the hills of Naphtali, but he doubted if he could gather enough of an army to make head against the Canaanite chief Sisera; and if he lost, that meant slaughter or slavery for all Hebrews in north Palestine. And so he and all the other chiefs of the Hebrews did nothing, while the situation grew continually worse.

It took a woman to dare. On the hills of Ephraim lived a prophetess, a woman to whom it was believed God revealed his will. She summoned Barak and said that Jehovah had told him to gather the people and fight Sisera. Now Barak was the strongest leader in Israel, but so cowed were the people that even he doubted if he could rouse them. He wanted the moral support of Deborah with her reputation as a woman of God. "I will go if you

will go with me," he said, "not otherwise." She regarded the proposition as an evidence of weakness. "I will go," she said, "but the honors of this campaign will be for a woman, not for you."

The place of gathering was Mount Tabor. It is a height northeast of the plain of Esdraelon from whose slopes could be seen the great stretch of valley with the river Kishon flowing through it, and on the other side, guarding the passes to the south, the Canaanite town of Taanach and, five miles farther, Megiddo. These towns were fortresses, with great stone walls and strong towers.

Recently the towns have been excavated, and the Canaanite remains show a strong people who could easily hold at bay poorly armed shepherds like the Hebrews. A group of tablets from the correspondence of one of the Chiefs of Taanach was discovered dating somewhat before the Hebrews came to Palestine. One of the letters to him reads, "Send your brethren with their chariots, and a horse, your tribute and presents, and all your prisoners; send them to Megiddo to-morrow." It is plain that the Canaanites had been men of war long before the days of Deborah.

No gathering of the Hebrew clans could take place under the very eyes of such experienced warriors and not be known. Sisera, at his fortress Harosheth on the western side of the plain a mile north of the Kishon, was soon told of it. He took his own forces, gathered those of Taanach and Megiddo and the other Canaanite towns, and marched out on the level plain. Their plan was

probably to surround the force on Tabor before the Hebrews could escape to the hills. On the plains they felt secure, for they had nine hundred chariots and the Hebrews had none. In the face of wheeled chariots, drawn by swift horses, footmen were as helpless as infantry with only rifles are to-day before heavy guns.

The Hebrews from their camp on the slopes of Tabor saw the line of chariots deploying on the plain in the distance. Deborah said, "Now is the time, Jehovah goes before you," and down the mountain side and out on the plain rushed the Hebrew force. Then, as the song tells the story, a storm broke in the faces of the Canaanites and a deluge of rain swept over the plain. The flat land became a marsh of mud and the sluggish little Kishon, a raging torrent. The host was passing Megiddo when the storm broke and the frequent water-courses from the hills to the south were now running full. The horses floundered in the marshy ground, the chariots sunk in the mire. Some were swept away in the rapid Kishon. The level ground which had been their defense became their death-trap. The Hebrews with the storm at their backs had the enemy at their mercy. Surely Jehovah was with them. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

The battle became a rout. Every man fled where he could. Had the people of Meroz, an unknown town on the course of the fleeing host, only been alive to their chance, no one would have escaped. Sisera abandoning his chariot fled to the northern hills.

Weary and wayworn he at last saw the tents of a group of Kenites from the south of Judah, who had wandered north with their flocks. These nomads had taken care to be at peace with all parties in the land. Here Sisera thought he might find refuge. At the door of the tent he asked for water. Jael, the mistress of the tent, poured him out a dish of curds, and as he lifted it to drink struck him down with a tentpin; so, as Deborah had said, the honors of the campaign went to a woman.

The prose story of Jael's deed is more elaborate. There the slaughter is treacherously made while Sisera is asleep. That is perhaps because the writer of the prose story understood the poem to speak of two weapons when, by repetition, it only means one weapon, the tentpin, which in the camp served for a weapon and a hammer and many other uses.

The victory had two permanent results for the Hebrews; it showed the value of united action, and it increased their loyalty to Jehovah. As for the Canaanites, it finally broke their power. Though many years passed before the Hebrews won all their fortresses they never again subjected the Hebrews to their rule.

While the battle was still fresh in mind some poet wrote a vigorous war ode. Perhaps it was sung in the village of Deborah when she returned after the campaign was over. It begins with praise to Jehovah, who came marching in the storm, and ends with the picture of Sisera's mother trying to keep up her courage as she waits his victorious return.

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There are obscurities in it, but it is vivid and picturesque and it stirred the hearts of many generations to faith in God and in their nation.

Judges 2:6–3:6, The introduction, showing the purpose of Judges; compare 3:7–9, 4:1–3, 6:1–6. Judges 3:7–30, Ehud delivers Israel. Judges 4, Deborah and Barah deliver Israel. Judges 5, The ballad of Deborah.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### GIDEON, REFORMER AND WARRIOR

“ NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER ”

How long was the time between Deborah and Gideon one cannot say. The statement in 5:31 that “the land had rest forty years” is a part of the editor’s work, and not of the original stories. The Canaanites and Hebrews now lived at peace. The Hebrews had become the dominant race. They were farmers, living in the towns and villages. They still had flocks pasturing on the mountains but they also owned land and raised grain.

This change from a wandering to a settled life gave a chance for a higher civilization, but they became less warlike.

The Arab tribes of the eastern desert found they could do what they pleased with the farmers of Palestine. We shall see that they probably had treaties with some of the people east of the Jordan, but they knew a more effective way with the people farther off, on the west of Jordan. Every year when the harvest was ripe a great horde of the nomads came across the Jordan, moved up into the rich region of the plain of Esdraelon and the fertile hills near by and proceeded to gather the harvest which the farmers had raised. It was the most cold-blooded

robbery imaginable. The farmers could do nothing, for the bandits came in swarms with their tents and swift camels. The story says that they spread over the land like a swarm of locusts. If any large proportion of the people could have united they might have made head against the robbers, but there was no sense of unity and no leader. The situation was peculiarly disheartening. The people labored on their farms all the summer only to see the harvest looted by this horde of brigands and carried off to feed the wives and children in robber camps while their own families went hungry. The condition was intolerable, but who was able to change it?

The Midianites who were the leaders in the raids were mentioned in the earlier stories of Israel as living in the deserts of Sinai, to the south of Palestine. It was among them that Moses is said to have taken refuge when he fled to Egypt. Now they lived to the east of Palestine and in the course of time had lost their old friendship with the Hebrews. They were much such Arab tribes as still live in the same country and still would be glad to rob the settled farm lands if they dared.

One autumn while the Arab robbers were camping in the land, a farmer named Gideon tried to save at least some of the wheat he had raised. He had reaped it and hidden it away. In other times he would have threshed it by spreading it out on the village threshing floor and driving oxen over the straw, but that was not safe now. Threshing floors were on high land to catch the wind for winnowing and could be seen from all the neighboring heights.

If the Arab raiders caught sight of him his grain would go into their tents. So he was beating out the wheat in the winepress, where the grapevines hid it from curious eyes.

There was more to rouse Gideon than the national humiliation. His own brothers had been killed in some skirmish with the enemy, and upon him lay the obligation of revenge. But how could he revenge his brothers? All Israel was helpless. He must submit with the rest. As he pounded out the grain with a stick, the story said that a stranger looked down through the dust of the threshing floor and said, in common enough words of greeting, "God be with you." Quick as a flash, his mind full of the humiliation of the situation, he replied bitterly, "God with us! If that is so, why is all this happening? Where are the wonderful things our fathers told us of, when he brought them out of Egypt? No. God has forsaken us. He has given us to these Arabs." Then the stranger looked at him and said, "You will deliver Israel." "I," said Gideon. "How can I do it? My clan is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in the clan." "Nevertheless," said the stranger, "you will do it, and God will be with you."

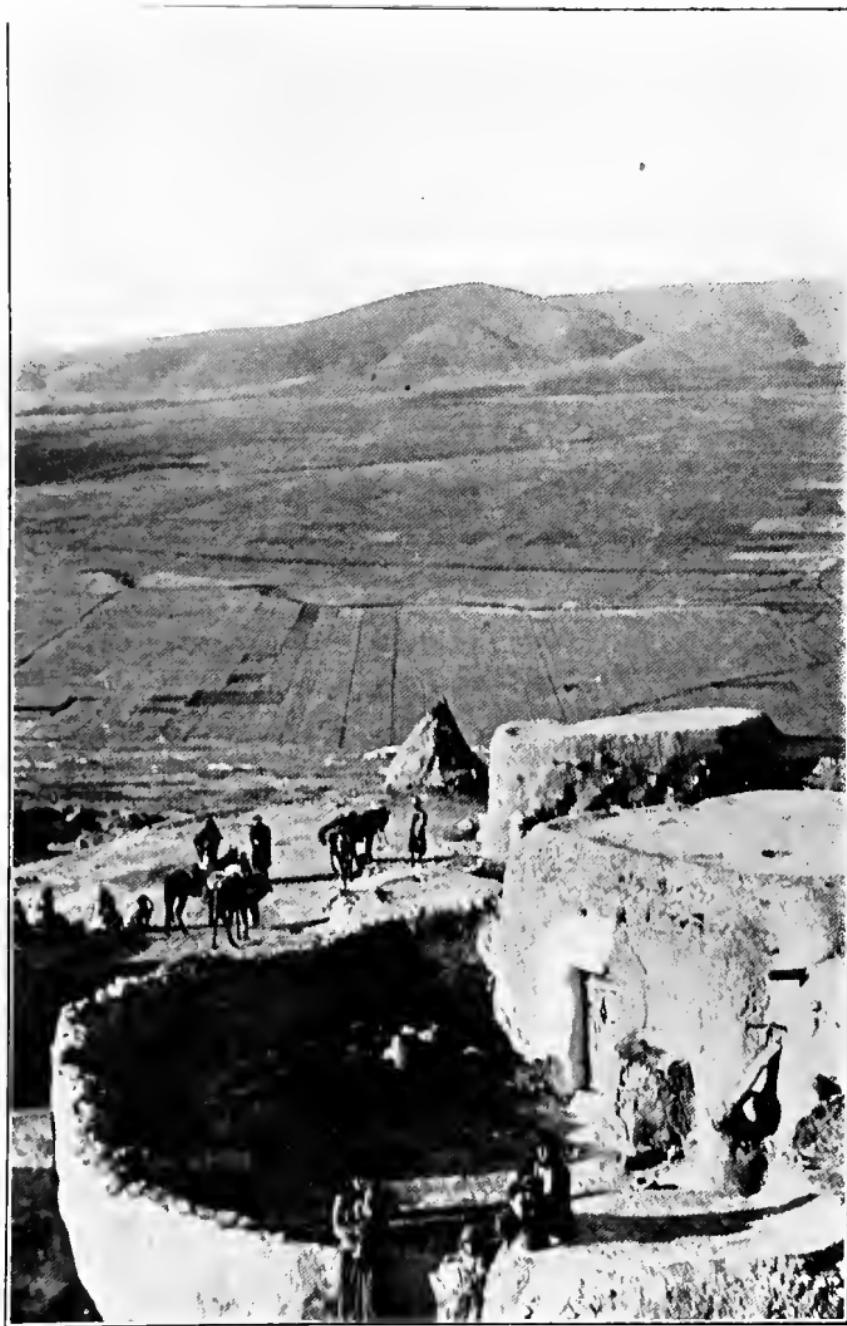
Evidently this stranger was a messenger from God, a prophet. Gideon wished to honor the stranger. He did what a modern Bedouin Arab would do if he had a distinguished guest, urged him to stay and eat with him. A meal was spread on a flat rock near by, when, as the story goes, the stranger touched it with his staff and fire broke out and con-

sumed it. Then the farmer knew that his visitor was a divine being.

Now the early Eastern people believed that gods might appear to men, but woe to the man to whom the appearance came, for "no man can look upon the face of God and live," so the first thought of Gideon was fear. But God answered, "Peace be to thee; fear not; thou shalt not die," and his mind was put at rest.

If he was to lead the fight for Israel in the name of the national God then he must try to dispose of the worship of other gods. There was a shrine to the Baal, the god of the locality, near by, and that same night Gideon called his servants and broke it down. On its ruins he built an altar to Jehovah and sacrificed an offering. The people were angry at his defiance of Baal, but his father defended him.

Now Gideon was ready for the next step. The great camps of the Arabs lay stretched across Esdraelon, near Jezreel, where the broad valley begins to slope down toward the Jordan. They felt secure in their numbers. As Gideon looked down from his native hills on the immense stretch of black tents he knew the danger of any attempt against them. Unless they could be suddenly and completely routed it would be better to do nothing. On their swift camels, hundreds of which were tethered about the widespread camp, they could carry a rapid campaign of frightfulness into all the country around. But he decided to take the risks. He called his own clan of Abiezer. Then, the later form of the story said, he called the warriors of Manasseh, Zebulun,



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The Plain of Esdraelon, Overlooking the Battlefield of Gideon from the Village on the Site of Jezreel. The Mud Houses Are Typical of Palestine Villages and Grainfields Can Be Seen in the Plain.



Asher and Naphtali, the tribes about the plain of Esdraelon. They gathered on the slopes of the hills which lay south of the plain; thirty-two thousand of them, so the story said.

One form of the tale brings in at this point a curious oracle. Gideon would test God's will yet further, and does it by means of a fleece of wool, which remained dry when all around was wet with dew, and became wet when all around was dry. Meantime the army was gathered — a miscellaneous, untrained mass. When Gideon gave permission for all who wished to go home there was a great scurrying away. Twenty-two thousand are said to have gone. Ten thousand were left, a formidable volunteer force. But still Gideon was not satisfied. "This," he said, "is God's battle, and it needs quality not quantity." He moved his camp close to the enemy and in so doing crossed a brook which flows from a spring under Gilboa. As the thirsty men crossed, some drank in one way and some in another. Possibly there was some significance in the attitude they took to drink, but the chief thing was that the smaller number — only about three hundred — were chosen for the battle, and all the rest sent home.

The gathering of the Hebrew clans was known to the Arabs, and Gideon was curious to learn what effect it had. In the early part of the night he went with a companion to reconnoiter. It was not much they heard — only a man telling his dream to his neighbor — but it showed how near to panic the camp had come. "I dreamed one of the round barley loaves came rolling into camp and hit a tent

and overturned it." "The loaf means Gideon, the Hebrew," said his neighbor. "We are defeated." Gideon had heard enough. Now was the time to strike. He hastened back to the camp and hastily arranged a clever stratagem. Three companies of Hebrews crept down on three sides of the Arab camp. Inside earthen drinking jars they held lighted torches, and they also had trumpets with them. Suddenly they broke the jars, flashed out the waving torches, and blew the trumpets and shouted, "For Jehovah and Gideon." The startled Arabs woke to a confusion of flashing lights and shouts and trumpet blasts; and the panic was on them. They thought every man seen in the dim starlight was an enemy, and slaughtered their own forces. Those who could mounted camels, and those who could not fled on foot. The fugitives poured down the valley toward the Jordan, still fighting among themselves, while the Hebrews followed after. In the Jordan Valley the Arabs veered toward the fords to the south. Gideon, who kept his wits in the confusion of battle, quickly dispatched messengers to the neighboring Ephraimite villages asking them to hold the fords and head off the fugitives. They did so, and killed two of the sheiks of the tribe, named Oreb and Zeeb.

Meantime Gideon and his three hundred crossed by the upper fords following a portion of the scattered army. Day must have dawned by this time. The Hebrews, weary and hungry, appealed for food to two Hebrew towns, only to be refused. The

towns were in treaty with the Arabs and dared not give aid.

The first stage of the campaign had been wholly successful. Now came the second stage. Merely to drive Midian across the Jordan was not enough. At some place far away on the border of the desert was the main camp of the tribe. The remnants of the fugitives felt safe when they reached it nor did any dream that the Hebrews would come so far from home. Gideon made a forced march, fell unexpectedly on the camp, routed his foe a second time, and carried off the two chief sheiks of the tribe. His plan was to weaken them so thoroughly that they would not dare to cross the Jordan again.

On his way back he took sharp vengeance on the towns which had refused help to their fellow countrymen. He conciliated Ephraim, a tribe often arrogant and always jealous of its honor; took blood revenge on the sheiks for the death of his brothers; and gave his part of the rich booty of the battle to make an image in honor of Jehovah who had given him the victory. The later writer of Judges, living in an age when the prophets objected to images, said that this became a snare to Gideon and his house.

Is it any wonder that the people, tired of disunion, offered this brave warrior and wise leader the kingship for himself and his successors? Not since the days of Joshua had there been such a leader in Israel. Doubtless he would have made a good king; but doubtless he saw that the people were not ready for a united rule. Gideon was wise in refusing to at-

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tempt the impossible and try to make a kingdom in Israel.

Judges 6, Gideon's call. Judges 7, The first battle.  
Judges 8, The second battle.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

### ABIMELECH AND JEPHTHAH

#### TWO TYPES OF MEN OF AMBITION

A great chief of the ancient East often made many marriages. Sometimes they were means of binding himself to neighboring tribes in alliance, or of linking the different sections of his own people to his interests. At least one of Gideon's wives was a Canaanite, and her son, Abimelech, reckoned himself more Canaanite than Hebrew. He lived near Shechem, among his mother's people; for this old city still belonged to the Canaanites.

Shechem lies at the opening of the valley between Ebal and Gerazim. It was the meeting place of two important roads, one east and west and one north and south. From very ancient days there had been a town here. The inhabitants were proud of their town and of its long history. Without doubt they looked on the Hebrews as a wild, rude people who ought, if justice were done, to be under the control of the old inhabitants of the land. It was one thing to acknowledge the power of that vigorous old warrier Gideon, and quite another to be under his sons after his death.

Abimelech came to the authorities of Shechem and raised the race problem. He played on their fears

of Hebrew rule. "Is it better that all Gideon's seventy sons should rule," he said, "or one only? And if one, can there be any choice? Remember that I am your own blood." The hint was enough. Now was the time to get the rule into their own clan.

In all the ancient world the shrines of the gods were places where the treasures of people were deposited. The Shechemites took money from the deposits in their local temple and gave to Abimelech. He used it for the unholy hire of assassins. On some dark night the party sneaked off to Ophrah, among the hills to the south, and killed all the sons of Gideon on whom they could lay hands, slaughtering them on a sacrificial stone, possibly as a sacrifice to the Canaanite god whose temple had furnished the pay of the murderers. And so the way was cleared by blood for the building of a kingdom. To be sure, the youngest of Gideon's sons, Jotham, had escaped from the massacre, but that was of no importance.

Jotham's escape was of no importance as far as the history of the kingdom went. The Hebrews did not rally to him to avenge his brothers' murder. By all the rules of tribal honor they ought to have done so. It was a bitter disgrace to him that they did not. They were too disunited to join against the forces of Abimelech, and so they swallowed the insult to their race and kept still.

Meantime Abimelech's plans went successfully. The Shechemites made him their king. A great feast was held at the shrine and Abimelech was

crowned. Suddenly over the crowd came a voice, "Hear me, men of Shechem, if you would have God hear you." The crowd stood still and looked up the mountain whence the voice came. On a projecting rock of the steep face of Gerazim stood a figure. Abimelech recognized him as Jotham, a most unwelcome guest at his coronation feast. If Jotham had concealed avenging Hebrews in the hollows of the hills the feast would end in a fight. But Jotham had no warriors — the more shame to his father's clan — and was only giving himself the personal satisfaction of making Abimelech ridiculous in the eyes of his guests. He told the listening crowd a little fable, such as orientals always loved. "Once upon a time the trees went out to choose a king. They said to the olive, 'Be our king'; but the olive said, 'Should I leave my richness which serves men and gods and come to rule over the trees?' Then they said to the fig-tree, 'Be our king.' The fig-tree said, 'Should I leave my sweet figs and come to rule over the trees?' Then they said to the vine, 'Be our king,' but the vine said, 'Should I leave my vintage and come to rule over the trees?' Then they said to the bramblebush, 'Be our king.' And the little bramblebush was very haughty and said, 'If you will really make me king, then come and trust in my shadow, and if not, let fire come out and burn all the great forest.' Now if you have dealt honorably with the house of Gideon, much joy may you and your bramble-king have of each other; and if not, may you and he wreck each other"; and with that curse on them he turned and disappeared among

the rocks on the mountains. The festivities must have rung a little hollow after that. When the hired singers sung their songs of extravagant praise to the new-made king and promised him greatness and glory men must have whispered to each other, "Bramble-king."

Things began to go badly in Shechem. Two forms of the story are combined in the account of Judges; very likely both are correct. One says that the men of Shechem became highway robbers and plundered the caravans. The other story has a long account of an adventurer, Gaal, who settled in Shechem and soon began to talk about how much better things would be if he were king; and the fickle, sordid Shechemites went over to him and made another coronation feast for this smooth-spoken scoundrel. Abimelech did not live in Shechem, but he had one faithful follower, Zebul, his chief in the city, who sent word of what was going on. Abimelech did not delay. That night he ranged troops on various sides of the city and in the morning, what with Zebul within and Abimelech without, Gaal and his party were forced into a losing fight; and that was the end of one ambitious adventurer.

But it was not the end of the trouble at Shechem. Things had come to such a pass that Abimelech planned another ambush, and when the men of Shechem had gone out, perhaps on a robbing excursion, attacked them from behind, cut off their retreat to the city, as Joshua had done at Ai, and routed them and destroyed the city. Near by was a for-

tress, the Tower of Shechem. Its inhabitants left the fortress and fled to the local temple. Now in all the ancient world a temple was a place of refuge. But Abimelech refused to allow the fugitives the refuge of the temple. He led his band to a wooded hill near by, every man cut a bough from a tree, and they piled the wood in front of the heavy door of the temple and set fire to it. So he destroyed the people of Shechem who had made him king and the temple of the god before whose shrine he had been crowned.

Thirteen miles from Shechem on the road to Beth-shean, where there is still a large village, was a town with a fortified tower. It had roused his anger, how we do not know, and he marched against it. The people fled to the tower. He proposed to burn this also, and incautiously came up to set it on fire. A woman dropped a stone of the common hand mill on his head from the top of the tower. When he knew he must die he begged to be killed by the sword of a warrior that he might be spared the disgrace of dying from a woman's blow. And so the bramble king perished and his kingdom perished with him.

All the stories of the judges thus far have come from the central and northern parts of Israel, but the tribes east of the Jordan had their troubles also. At some time during this period the Ammonites, a shepherd people living to the east of Gilead, began to make raids on the Hebrews. They were not merely cattle-thieves; they had an old grudge against Israel. Long ago they had held a part of Gilead. Then a stronger tribe, the Amorites, had crowded

them out. Soon after their retreat the Hebrews had taken the land from the Amorites. Naturally the Ammonites still remembered that those rich pastures had once belonged to their fathers, and when they became strong enough to loot the towns and drive off the cattle, they had an excuse for it.

In time the attacks grew so serious that the people of Gilead began to look for a leader to oppose them. In the rugged wilderness to the northeast lived an outlaw named Jephthah, a sort of desert Robin Hood, with his following of bold bandits. He had been driven out of Gilead, but when they needed a leader, the Gileadites went to his stronghold in the desert. "Come and assist us against the Ammonites," they said. "I will," he replied, "on one condition; that you will make me the head of all your chiefs." It may have been a hard condition, but they consented.

Jephthah prepared to meet the Ammonites and, since he was religious in his way, he sought to get the help of God by means of a vow. He promised to sacrifice whoever first came out to meet him, if God would bring him home in victory. Jephthah meant to pledge a human sacrifice; that was his idea of the best gift he could offer God. He won his victory and when he came back the women of his camp arranged to meet the victor with music and dance; and his only child, his beloved daughter, led the dance with pride and joy. The stern old man was broken hearted, but he had no thought of taking back his word. "Oh, my daughter," he cried, "you have crushed me. You! But I have prom-

ised Jehovah. I cannot go back." His daughter knew what he meant. Human sacrifice was not uncommon among the Palestinian people. Then this girl reared in the desert robber's tent rose to such nobility as no lady of a king's court ever surpassed. "You have promised Jehovah," she said. "Do to me what you promised."

She died without children to keep her name in memory; that seemed to ancient Hebrews the hardest part of her hard fate. But the people never forgot her. Much later it was still a custom among the women of Gilead to hold each year a period of mourning for Jephthah's daughter.

Jephthah lived to hold his headship in Gilead for only six years after this. His troubles were not with Ammon, but with Israel. Ephraim, always arrogant and jealous, objected to Jephthah's independence, as they had to Gideon's. Gideon had conciliated and flattered them. Jephthah fought them. After their defeat the Gileadites held the fords of the Jordan and made all suspicious characters say "Shibboleth." The Ephraimites, who spoke a little different dialect, said "Sibboleth," and no Ephraimite was allowed to escape. What national life could be expected from so disunited a people?

Judges 9, The man who wanted to be a king. Judges 11, The victory of Jephthah and its sad ending.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### SAMSON

#### THE LEAST HEROIC OF BIBLICAL HEROES

During the time of the Judges another invasion of Palestine was going on. The Philistines appeared on the coast of the plain. They were wild searovers like the Northmen in Europe, who made landings and settlements where they could. They probably belonged to a group of peoples that were harrying the coasts of Egypt at this time. The Egyptians called them simply the Sea Peoples. Where they came from has been much discussed, perhaps from Crete or some of the islands or coasts of the Mediterranean. They were vigorous warriors with compact, well organized governments. They speedily subdued all the plain by the sea, but usually let the hills alone. If, however, the people in the hills seemed to be growing too strong, so that their possession of the plain might be endangered, then the Philistines sent armies through the foothills and demanded tribute.

From these circumstances come the stories of Samson. He was a Danite, from the section of the tribe that had remained in their southern home. His birthplace was Zorah in a valley of the western foothills, about seventeen miles west of Jerusalem,

only three or four miles from the border of the land of the Philistines. The two peoples lived in peace and even sometimes intermarried, but beneath their harmony there was a strong race feeling. Any story in which Hebrews got the better of the Philistines was repeated with great satisfaction, and we may be sure it lost nothing in the telling.

To the modern way of thinking, Samson was very far from being a hero. He did nothing for his country. He never led his people in battle. He never tried to better their condition in any way. Most of the judges were champions of Jehovah; he did nothing to further the worship of the national god. His morals were low, even from the standpoint of that crude civilization. The ideals of his life were selfish. The stories of him show a character not so much immoral as unmoral, like the fawns and satyrs of Greek myth. He is pictured as an overgrown child, wayward, blundering, vengeful, whose only claim for attention was his tremendous strength and the pitiful tragedy of the close of his life.

Immense bodily strength was the center of all the stories told about him. These tales had elements of humor. In the country on the border of the Philistines, among a people whose fathers had fought those warriors and sometimes been conquered by them, stories of how Samson tricked them and did them damage were greatly enjoyed.

The stories the people told accounted for Samson's strength by saying that he had been from birth under a vow that his hair should not be cut and that he should drink no wine. This vow, called the Naz-

irite's vow, was often taken temporarily. It marked a devotion to the national God. The abstinence from wine marked the devotion to the god of the desert tribe by denying oneself the luxuries of the rich vineyards of Palestine. The hair was sacred in many religions. The devotee sometimes vowed it to his god and only cut it as a sacrifice to him. The popular explanation of Samson's strength was that Jehovah gave it to him in return for his strict keeping of the Nazirite vow.

Samson's birth was predicted, so the story said, by a messenger from God, and the Nazirite life of the boy prescribed. When Samson was grown he saw, in the neighboring town of Timnah, a Philistine maiden who charmed his fancy and he asked his parents to get her for his wife. This did not please them. They had no liking for a foreign daughter-in-law. So the headstrong youth took matters into his own hands, and quite naturally got into trouble because of it. There were two kinds of marriages. In the more common kind the wife was brought to the home of the husband and the children became members of his clan. In the other the wife stayed with her own family and her children belonged to her clan. Now as Samson's parents would not consent to a marriage of the first kind he proposed to make a marriage of the second kind. On his way to arrange the marriage he killed a lion among the vineyards but said nothing to any one about it. Later he went down to the marriage feast and turned aside to see what had become of the body of the lion. He found that a swarm of

wild bees had made a hive of its sun-dried skin and bones, and he took some honey and ate it as he walked on. Then came the seven days' wedding feast, with the festivities and games. As part of the entertainment the groom propounded a riddle to thirty young Philistine men who were his guests. If they could guess it during the feast he would give them thirty linen garments and festival robes; if not, they were to give him the same.

The riddle was:

From the eater came food to eat,  
From the strong came what is sweet.

No wonder they despaired of guessing it and appealed to the bride for help.

Then just before the sun set on the last day of the feast the young men said to Samson, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" and Samson knew that his bride had betrayed him. Hot with indignation he deserted her before the wedding was hardly complete, paid his debt with the spoil of a raid on other Philistines, and went home. The father of the bride resented the disgrace put upon his family and married the bride to Samson's best man, and considered his dealings with this hot-headed young Hebrew at an end.

When Samson had time to cool his anger he regretted his action. He went to his wife as though no break had taken place, and was told by her father that she was married to another. Samson said to himself, "Now I have a right to take vengeance." He caught foxes — three hundred of them, the He-

brew storytellers said,— tied burning brands between the tails of every two and turned them loose in the grain, already dry for the harvest. The fire spread far and wide through the fields. Hunger stared the people in the face, and since Samson was beyond their reach, they took savage vengeance on the family of the bride.

Not satisfied with that, they resolved to capture Samson, who had taken refuge in a cave in the mountains of Judah. Now Judah was subject to their Philistine neighbors, and when an armed band of Philistines marched in and demanded Samson, the men of Judah bound him with ropes and gave him up. A great shout of glee arose as their prey was brought into the camp. That was a spur to Samson's strength. He broke the ropes, caught up the first weapon he could put hand on, the jawbone of an ass, and laid about lustily. The story said he killed a thousand men. Perhaps the number came from the punning couplet ascribed to him as he threw his weapon down,

With the jawbone of an ass, mass upon mass,  
With the jawbone of an ass I killed a thousand enemies.

Other stories were told in which his strength and nimble wits got the better of the Philistines. Once when they thought they had him trapped in Gaza, a city in the southern part of the plain, he slipped out in the night, pulled up the framework in which the city gates were set, and carried off gates, posts and all on his shoulders. He took them almost forty miles and set them down on a hill near Hebron.

No feats of strength were too great for popular traditions to assign to this hero.

At last he met his fate, and again it was his trust in a faithless Philistine woman which led him into trouble. He formed an attachment for a woman named Delilah who lived in Sorek not far from his home. Soon she began to beg him to tell her the secret of his strength. She probably thought it lay in some amulet or charm or talisman. Samson was minded to have his joke with her, and said, "I will tell you, If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings I cannot break them." So she produced the seven bowstrings and bound him. Then she said, "The Philistines are coming," and he snapped the bowstrings and she saw that he had deceived her.

Again she begged his secret, and again he pretended to tell her. "If they bind me with new ropes that never have been used I cannot break them," he said. So she brought new ropes and bound him, but when she said, "The Philistines are coming," he broke them off his arms like thread, and Delilah knew that she was deceived again.

A third time she begged his secret, and a third time he pretended to tell her. "Weave my long hair into the web of the loom and beat it up tight in the cloth," he said, "and I cannot get away." She did so, but when she said, "The Philistines are coming," he walked off and took the loom with him.

"How can you say you love me," said Delilah, "when you deceive me like this?" At last he told her the truth. His strength was the gift of God,

and depended on his keeping the vow his parents had placed upon him. If his hair were cut his vow would be broken and his strength gone.

Now with all her pretended love for Samson Delilah was working for the Philistines. They had offered to make her rich for life if she would get the secret of Samson's strength. In his sleep she cut off his hair, and then when she said, "The Philistines are coming," he had no more strength than any other man.

The broken giant was blinded and imprisoned, and set to turn a handmill. His tribe of Dan were too weak and too unwarlike to attempt his rescue or to take vengeance for him. Meantime, as his hair grew, his strength returned, but the Philistines never thought of that.

One day there came a great festival, a sacrifice to Dagon, the god of the Philistines. As the feast went on they called for Samson. He was brought out and set to try feats of strength. Wearyed at last, he asked to be allowed to rest against the pillars which upheld a crowded roof on one side of the open court of the high place of Dagon. Then, with a prayer for vengeance — the only religious suggestion in all the stories of his exploits — he threw himself with all his strength upon the pillars and brought the roof filled with people crashing down upon himself and the crowds beneath; and the merry festival ended in tragedy.

Judges 13, The birth of Samson. Judges 14, 15, Samson's exploits. Judges 16:4-31, Samson's defeat and death.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### STORIES OF THE BEGINNING

#### WHAT THE HEBREWS BELIEVED ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF HUMAN HISTORY

Every people has asked such questions as "How was the world made?" "Who was the first man?" "Why do different nations speak different languages?" The Hebrews also had their stories about the beginnings of things. In the main these came from the old stock of Semitic tales told long before the Hebrews became a separate race. Those who wrote the earliest collection made few changes in the traditions. They told them very much as the Hebrew children had heard them from the old men and women.

Because those who first collected these tales were interested in religion they told the stories so as to teach the power and pity of God and the sad results of sin. These were the prophetic collectors of stories, who wanted to teach that God punished sin and rewarded the faithful. Later the priestly collectors also retold some of the old stories to show how certain things connected with worship or with the law arose. Both collections were used by the writer of Genesis, the first eleven chapters of which contain these traditions of the beginning of the world.

The first section of Genesis is a stately poem of creation. It came from the priestly collector of stories. He took a majestic old poem which divided the period of creation into six days. Each day had its work, ending with the creation of man. Then, God rested on the seventh day, and he blessed it and hallowed it and made it a day of rest for man. The priestly writer has told the story of creation to show how the Sabbath is embedded in the world itself. But more important for all time than this teaching regarding the Sabbath is the idea of God. He is a great God, who speaks and it is done, who creates and sees that it is good; and man, made in the image of God, shares his rule of the world and helps work out his purpose. It is a lofty idea of God and of man.

In Genesis 2 : 4 begins the account from the prophetic collection of stories. It tells less of creation than of what took place afterwards. "In the day that Jehovah God made earth and heaven, then no plant of the field was yet in the earth"; but a mist arose to water the dry ground and then plants grew. God made a garden and created a man, Adam, to care for it. He created animals in an attempt to make fit companions for the man, and when this did not succeed he created woman. As in so many old stories, the animals could talk with men and a snake persuaded the woman, and she the man, to disobey God. When God came down that evening to walk in the garden in the cool of the day they hid for fear of him. Adam and Eve were sent out of the garden, the snake was condemned to crawl on the

ground and to be hated by men, and man was condemned to labor and woman to suffer, while the earth was doomed to hinder their work with thorns and thistles. The prophetic collector used this old story to show that sin brings suffering. The picture of God here is not majestic and lofty. As usual in the oldest stories, God is like a man. He experiments with creation, he has to come down to earth to find out what is going on, he talks in a familiar way with man and takes pleasure in him when he is good and punishes him when he disobeys.

The story of Cain and Abel in chapter 4 came also from the prophetic collection. It is a story of the beginnings of the common occupations and arts. Cain in a fit of anger slew his brother Abel and fled to avoid the vengeance of his family and neighbors. He married a wife and founded a city, and among his descendants arose the arts of tent-making and of hammering brass and iron. The prophet collector used the story to show again how sin brings punishment. Cain, driven out for his sins, cries, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

Another old story told in the homes of Palestine was that of a flood. In Babylon the tale was woven into a poem and has come down to us in a form which has many likenesses to that of the Hebrews. An ark is built at the command of the gods, the Noah of the story takes into it his family and animals; when the flood is over he sends out birds to find if there is any land yet free from water, and when the ark alights, he makes a sacrifice to the gods.

“ ‘ O man of Shurippak, son of Ubaratutu,  
 Pull down thy house, build a ship,  
 Leave thy possessions, take thought for thy life,  
 Thy property abandon, save thy life,  
 Bring living seed of every kind into the ship.’

“ Six days and nights  
 Blew the wind, the deluge and the tempest overwhelmed  
 the land.  
 When the seventh day drew nigh, the tempest ceased; the  
 deluge,  
 Which had fought like an army, ended.

To the land of Nisir the ship made its way,  
 The mount of Nisir held it fast, that it moved not.

When the seventh day approached  
 I sent forth a dove and let her go.  
 The dove flew to and fro,  
 But there was no resting place and she returned.  
 I sent forth a swallow and let her go,  
 The swallow flew to and fro,  
 But there was no resting place and she returned.  
 I sent forth a raven and let her go,  
 The raven flew away, she saw the abatement of the waters,  
 She drew near, she waded, she croaked, and came not  
 back.  
 Then I sent everything forth to the four quarters of  
 heaven,  
 I offered sacrifice,  
 I made a libation upon the mountain’s peak.”<sup>1</sup>

While the likenesses are so great that there is  
 no doubt of the common origin of the stories, the

<sup>1</sup> From Rogers, *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, New York,  
 1908, p. 200 ff.

Babylonian tale is entirely lacking in the religious value of the Biblical story. The Hebrew tale was used by both the prophetic and priestly collectors and the writer of Genesis has taken parts of each version and has kept the religious purpose of both.

The world had grown corrupt. All the thoughts of man's heart were evil, till at last God was sorry that he had made man; then he brought the flood upon the world. Thus the prophetic story teller teaches his familiar lesson that sin brings punishment. The priestly story teller makes the tale lead up to a little group of laws. Men may eat plants and the flesh of animals, but the blood was believed to be the seat of life and it must not be eaten, but poured out so that the life could go back to God. He who killed a man must pay for his crime with his own life. This little group of laws is the first of the codes which the priestly writer wove into the collection of tales.

One might expect that the priestly writer would lay great stress on the sacrifice which the old story said Noah made after the flood, but he does not mention it. The laws of sacrifice were, so he thought, revealed by God to Moses, and he dropped sacrifices out of all the older stories in which they occurred. This makes one curious difference in the two versions of the story. The prophetic writer, telling of a sacrifice, must provide animals for it, and so Noah takes into the ark seven each of the clean animals, that is, those used for sacrifice; the priestly writer has no need of this and says that Noah took in two each of all animals. It is easy, however, to go back

of all such differences to the tale as it was told in the hills of Palestine.

The Hebrews were a small people crowded in between other peoples, some closely related and some of different customs, lineage and language. Traveling merchants from the distant lands of Egypt and Babylon brought them news of still other races, while reports of countries and peoples across the sea came from the traders of Tyre and Sidon, who brought goods and sailors' tales from Greece and Italy and Carthage and far-off Spain. One of the questions the children were sure to ask and the older people to try to answer was, "Why are there so many peoples in the world?" The collectors of stories have preserved some of the answers. One kind of answer is in chapter 10. It is a table of nations, not all from one source. After the ancient eastern fashion, it was put in the form of family history, like the Hebrew stories of their own origin from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In the account of the flood it was said that Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. These, then, must have been the ancestors of all the nations. From Japheth came the distant tribes, such as the Greeks (Javan, that is, Ionia) and the Medes (Madai) over the mountains beyond Assyria, and the other far-off peoples of which the Hebrews had barely heard the names. From Ham came some of the peoples whom they knew better — the Egyptians (Mizraim) and the tribes of southern Arabia (Seba and Havilah), Babylon (Babel) and Assyria (Asshur) and the old inhabitants of Palestine

(Canaan). From Shem came the Hebrews and nations whom they regarded as kin — the people of Elam beyond Babylonia, of Mesopotamia (Aram), of Assyria (Asshur, also said to be from Ham) and the tribes of northern Arabia (Joktan and his descendants). So they classified the nations which they knew and accounted for their origin and relationships. Of course the classification was not scientific; we should not expect that in ancient stories. The Canaanites, for example, were much more closely akin to the Hebrews than were the Elamites.

Sometimes the children put the question a little differently and asked where the different languages came from and why all people did not speak the same tongue. An old Babylonian tale, the story of Babel, was used to answer this question.

Once upon a time all the world talked the same language and all lived together as one people; and they all moved down to the plain of Shinar, which is a part of Babylonia. The plain was so fertile that they decided to wander no more. They built a city and, growing proud of their power, started to build a great tower so high that it would reach to heaven.

Then God came down to see what the race of men were doing, and he was jealous of the power which they showed. He said to the members of his court in heaven, "The people are one and they all speak one language and they will be able to do anything they want. Let us go down and confuse their language so they will speak different tongues and be unable to understand each other. Then they must scatter and lose their power and their pride." God

did this; then they stopped building the city and the tower and were scattered over all the earth. That is how different peoples and different languages arose.

The story was first told in Babylon to account for some ruined tower, such as the Babylonians built at their temples, whose origin was so ancient that it had been forgotten. It was used by the Hebrews to account for the name Babylon (*Babel*), which in its own language meant "The Gate of God." To the Hebrew the name suggested the word *babel*, which meant to confuse, and so they said it was the place where God confused the languages. The tale came into the Bible from the collection of the prophetic writer. He had used it to teach his favorite lesson that sin brings punishment.

We shall not look to these old stories for the real history of the origin of the human race, of nations and of languages. The value of these Hebrew stories of the beginnings lies not in any science or history which they give, but in their vivid and picturesque story telling, in their conception of the relation of God to man and the world, and in the idea that suffering comes to guilty and innocent alike when men do wrong.

Genesis 1:1-2:4, The story of Creation. Genesis 2:4-4:26, Eden, and the beginnings of society. Genesis 6-9, The tradition of the flood. Genesis 11:1-11, The tower of Babel.

## CHAPTER XXX

### A REVIEW

#### GENERAL DIVISIONS

The period covered in this book may be divided into three parts: I. Abraham to Joseph; II. Moses and Joshua; III. The Judges. The first part carries the Hebrews from Ur through Palestine to Egypt; the second, from Egypt through northern Arabia back to Palestine; and the third tells of the formation of the nation in Palestine.

#### THE GREAT CHARACTERS

Try to picture the life and character of each of the men studied. Recall the main events in the life of each. Abraham was a great adventurer, a pioneer who migrated from Ur into a new land. There he pastured his flocks on the hills near Shechem, then was driven by the pressure of the population into the less fertile hills in the south. Remember the story of his great test, when he showed himself willing to give up his only son if God asked it. Recall how, when their flocks grew too large to be pastured together, he offered his nephew Lot the choice of the best land, and how later he pled with God to save the evil towns of the Plain. Think what his life shows as to his character — strong, faithful, generous, large hearted.

Isaac was a less heroic character. He spent all his years in the region of Hebron and Beersheba, on the southern border of Palestine. The stories told of him made him far less impressive to the imagination of Israel than was his rugged father, Abraham. There was, however, a charm about his quiet, peace-loving life.

Jacob tried to be clever and over-reached himself. Recall the main events in the story of his life — his trick to out-wit his brother Esau, his flight because of this to distant Mesopotamia, his life there with its love and toil and trouble, his return to Palestine, the quarrels among his sons, the long years of sorrow over the loss of Joseph, and at last his journey to Egypt and his old age in that land where Joseph was premier. Recall how the tales show a cunning, clever schemer, always trying to get the better of others and always finding that his selfish scheming brought trouble on himself. Remember how life disciplined him till he became less selfish in his old age. His character was one of mingled good and evil, but with an energy and nobility which made stories of him very popular in Israel, as we may see by the fullness with which they are told.

Joseph, the viceroy of Egypt, brings the romance of courtly splendor into these shepherds' tales. Review the events of the story — the pampered and selfish boy in his father's camp, his sale as a slave, the new life in Egypt, the trust he won from his master, his imprisonment and romantic release, the efficient management of famine relief which made him viceroy, and at last his unexpected reunion with

his own family, whom prosperity had not driven from his affection. It is a characteristic romantic tale of the East, with the sudden shifts of scene and fortune which oriental story tellers have always loved, and it is also a picture of one of the finest characters in all the stories of the world.

Moses, the deliverer, presents another tale of contrasts. The slave baby, the foster son of a princess, the fugitive shepherd in Arabia, the champion of Hebrew serfs in the court where he had been reared, the leader of a fickle, undisciplined mob in the half-desert wilderness, the great organizer who by sheer force of personality molded this mob into some semblance of a nation till at last the people were strong enough to win pasture lands and villages in the fertile country east of the Jordan, the aged man who died alone on a mountain top whither God had called him to look at the western hills he was never to enter — the story was one of absolute faithfulness to ideals, of long, patient labor and of triumph at last. Moses was a practical idealist. He was a great administrator. He was a lawgiver; the origin of Hebrew law, as far as it was anything more than the traditional customs of shepherd tribes, was due to this great leader. He organized the worship of Jehovah and made loyalty to this God the rallying-point of Hebrew nationality. The Hebrews were quite right to consider him the great originator of their law and religion.

Joshua the warrior is still a different type. Recall what the stories ascribe to him — the leadership of Israel after the death of Moses, the conquest of

Jericho and Ai, then a treaty with the Gibeonites, and further conquests of tribes in southern Israel and in the northern part of the land. After that his activity as a leader ceased. The stories know nothing of him as a civil ruler. The late priestly tradition told how he distributed the land to the tribes of Israel, but the earlier traditions imply that each tribe won its own territory as it was able. Joshua seems to have settled down in his tribe of Ephraim. The only great event which tradition told of his later life was that, in his old age, he twice gathered representatives of the people and pledged the nation to the continued worship of Jehovah.

Some of the lesser Judges, Othniel and Ehud, are obscurely pictured, while others, Shamgar, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon, are little more than names, but the greater Judges were the subjects of very clear and vivid narratives.

Deborah, the woman warrior, inspired the nation to meet the growing power of the old Canaanite inhabitants. Recall the ringing war ballad which celebrated the victory over Sisera. Gideon broke the power of raiders from the eastern desert. Recall the stories which gathered about the memory of the gallant fight he made with his little band against the horde of Arab invaders. During this period the lack of unity was the great danger of the people. They began to see it, and Abimelech, the half-Canaanite son of Gideon, attempted to form a military despotism in which Canaanite and Hebrew should unite. The time was not ripe, the two races could not mix, and Abimelech was not the man,

either in character or in ability, to found a kingdom. Jephthah, the outlaw of Gilead, became the leader of the Hebrews east of the Jordan in a crisis much like that of the time of Deborah. The tribe of Ammon, who had formerly held land east of the Jordan and been dispossessed by the Amorites whom the Hebrews had conquered, were now ready to try to win back the land of their fathers. Jephthah defeated them, but we recall how his victory was turned into mourning by the sad chance which made his only child the victim of his vow. Before the close of this period another race of invaders, the Philistines, had appeared in Palestine and the stories of Samson reflect the strained relation on the southwestern border between Philistines and Hebrews. Samson was not, like the other judges, a man of nobility. He comes near to being a buffoon. He was never, so far as the tales shows, a Judge, though the editor of the stories numbers him among the Judges. Whatever heroism was in his story shows itself at the close of his career when, blind and a prisoner, he gave his life for vengeance. It is heroism of a primitive, savage sort, but it at least shows a man who sets something, if it be only revenge, at a higher value than his own life.

What a varied collection of pictures! How many types of character! The stories give us tragedy and humor, nobility and baseness. They picture characters which command our honor and others which compel contempt, and still others where good and evil are mingled. In all of them, however, the ancient story tellers showed that sin brought suffering and

that God was guiding the purposes of men to the fulfillment of his own will.

#### THE END OF THE ERA

What was the situation of the people at the end of the period?

I. They had won their place in the land. The old inhabitants were still there, but no longer fought against them. Partly by conquest, partly by treaties of alliance, partly by intermarriage and social harmony, the races were reaching a unity, though as yet an imperfect unity.

II. They had borrowed largely from the earlier people. They came into Palestine a race of rude shepherds. The Canaanites possessed a higher culture, built better homes, had better methods of agriculture. They had horses and chariots of war while the Hebrews fought on foot. The Hebrews borrowed also the Canaanite agricultural feasts at seed time and at the beginning and the end of harvest. These became the great feasts of the religion of Jehovah. The Hebrews borrowed the sacred places of the Canaanites, worshiping Jehovah where the old inhabitants still worshiped their local gods, the Baals. Naturally they not only borrowed some of the forms of worship but also worshiped the Baals.

III. The lack of national unity was the great political danger of the Hebrews. It went so far in the time of the Judges that some tribes refused to aid others against an oppressor. Judah and Simeon in the South were not even expected to act with the tribes of the North. Occasionally the tribes were at

war between themselves. Like the Balkan states, their lack of unity was a danger to themselves and a menace to the peoples about. Before the period of the Judges was far advanced some of the people saw the danger, and Abimelech tried to turn it to his purposes. Before the end of the period the pressure of the Philistines drove the people to unite. The next great period of history was the formation of a Hebrew kingdom. The Judges prepared the way for the Kings. A settled nation needs a strong government.

#### DATES OF THE HISTORY

In telling their traditions the early Hebrews cared nothing about the dates of the history. The later writers of the Bible inserted a scheme of dates, but it is artificial and somewhat obscure. The close of the period of the Judges is usually put at about 1050 B. C., a little earlier than the traditional date of Homer in Greece. The period of the Judges may have extended over one or two centuries. The dates of the earlier events have been the subject of much discussion. Perhaps the Hebrews left Egypt about 1200 B. C. Dates of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are impossible to assign.

#### THE PERMANENT VALUE OF THE TRADITIONS

The exact amount of history lying behind these traditions is in some cases uncertain. The traditions of the Judges tell of real characters, probably sometimes with considerable exactness. The Song of Deborah seems to be an almost contemporary poem.

## 222 THE HEROES OF EARLY ISRAEL

Joshua and Moses were great leaders, in no wise to be discounted because a grateful memory may have enlarged the work they did. The stories of Jacob and Abraham may contain, along with traditions of great leaders, the memories of journeys and wars of the Hebrew tribes.

We study the old stories of Israel not because they tell us in every case exactly what took place in the infancy and childhood of the nation, but because they contain splendid story telling, give us in pictorial form the best ideals of the highest religion in the ancient world, and are an important part of the basis of our own English and American life.

## BOOK LIST

The following list is not exhaustive, but contains the names of certain untechnical books, some of which are written to meet the needs of young people.

### I. GEOGRAPHY

George Adam Smith. *Historical Geography of the Holy Land.* Two volumes. First edition, 1894. A great work, comprehensive, vivid, with excellent maps.

C. F. Kent. *Biblical Geography and History.* New York, 1911. An excellent manual.

L. H. Wild. *Geographical Influences in Old Testament Master-pieces.* Boston, n. d. The relation of geography to the literature of the Bible.

### II. TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

C. F. Kent. *The Historical Bible.* New York, 1908. Volumes I and II deal with early Israel to Solomon.

*The Bible for Home and School.* New York. Small commentaries of separate books, giving modern scholarship in simple form.

*The Century Bible.* Edinburgh, New York. Another series of small and excellent commentaries.

N. M. Hall. *Tales of Far-Off Days. Tales of Captains and Conquests.* Boston, 1920. Two volumes, giving the story of Israel to the end of the reign of Solomon, with its connections in English literature.

### III. HISTORY

F. K. Sanders. *History of the Hebrews.* New York, 1914. A comprehensive outline, arranged for class use.

George Hodges. *Classbook of Old Testament History.* 1913. Designed for young people; brief and interesting.

L. H. Wild. *The Evolution of the Hebrew People.* New York, 1917. A broad introduction to Biblical history, geography and literature.

H. P. Smith. *Old Testament History.* New York, 1903. A larger and more detailed work with interesting descriptions of early Israel in chapters IV to VI.

#### IV. THE LITERATURE OF THE BIBLE

George Hodges. *How to Know the Bible.* Indianapolis, 1918. The growth of the Bible simply and skillfully told.

G. F. Genung. *A Guidebook to the Bible.* Boston, 1919. The growth of Hebrew Literature as the expression of its life.

Wood and Grant. *The Bible as Literature.* New York, 1914. Brief introduction to the biblical books.

G. F. Moore. *The Literature of the Old Testament.* New York, 1913. A skillful introduction, containing much information in a brief space.

H. T. Fowler. *A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel.* New York, 1912. A careful and scholarly history of the growth of the Old Testament, excellent for teachers.

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